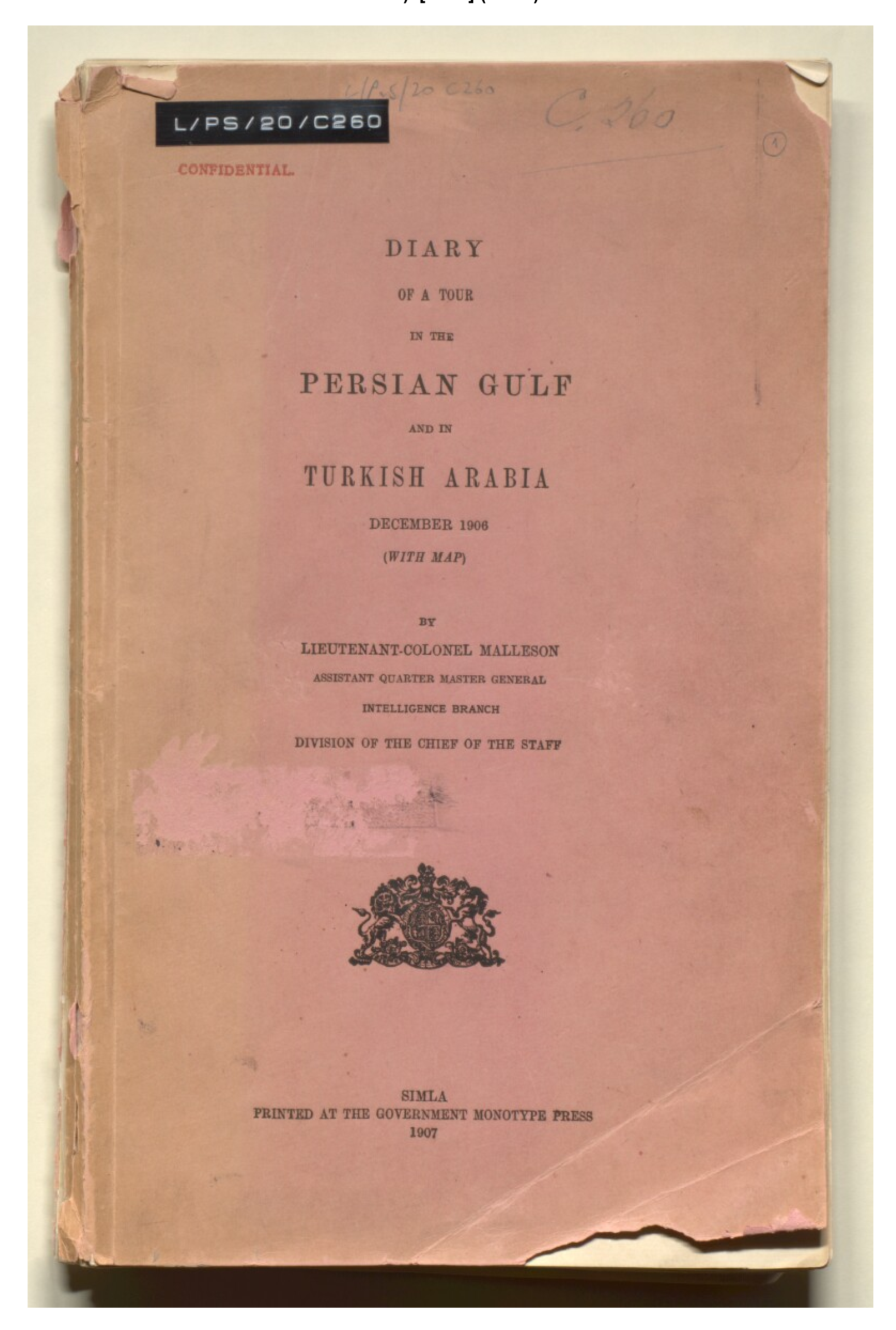


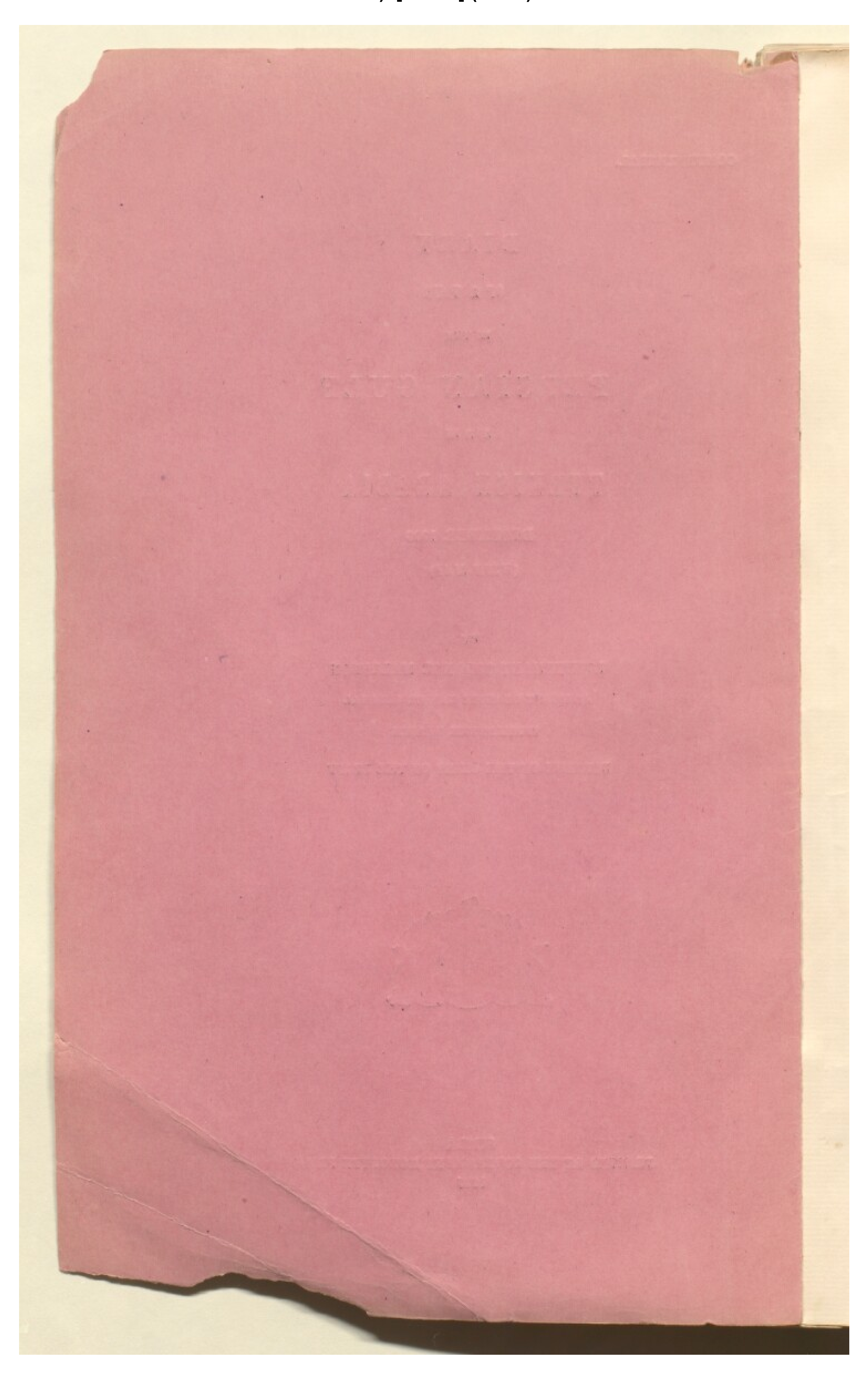
Reference	IOR/L/PS/20/C260
Title	'DIARY OF A TOUR IN THE PERSIAN GULF AND IN TURKISH ARABIA, DECEMBER, 1906 (WITH MAP)'
Date(s)	1907 (CE, Gregorian)
Written in	English in Latin
Extent and Format	53 folios
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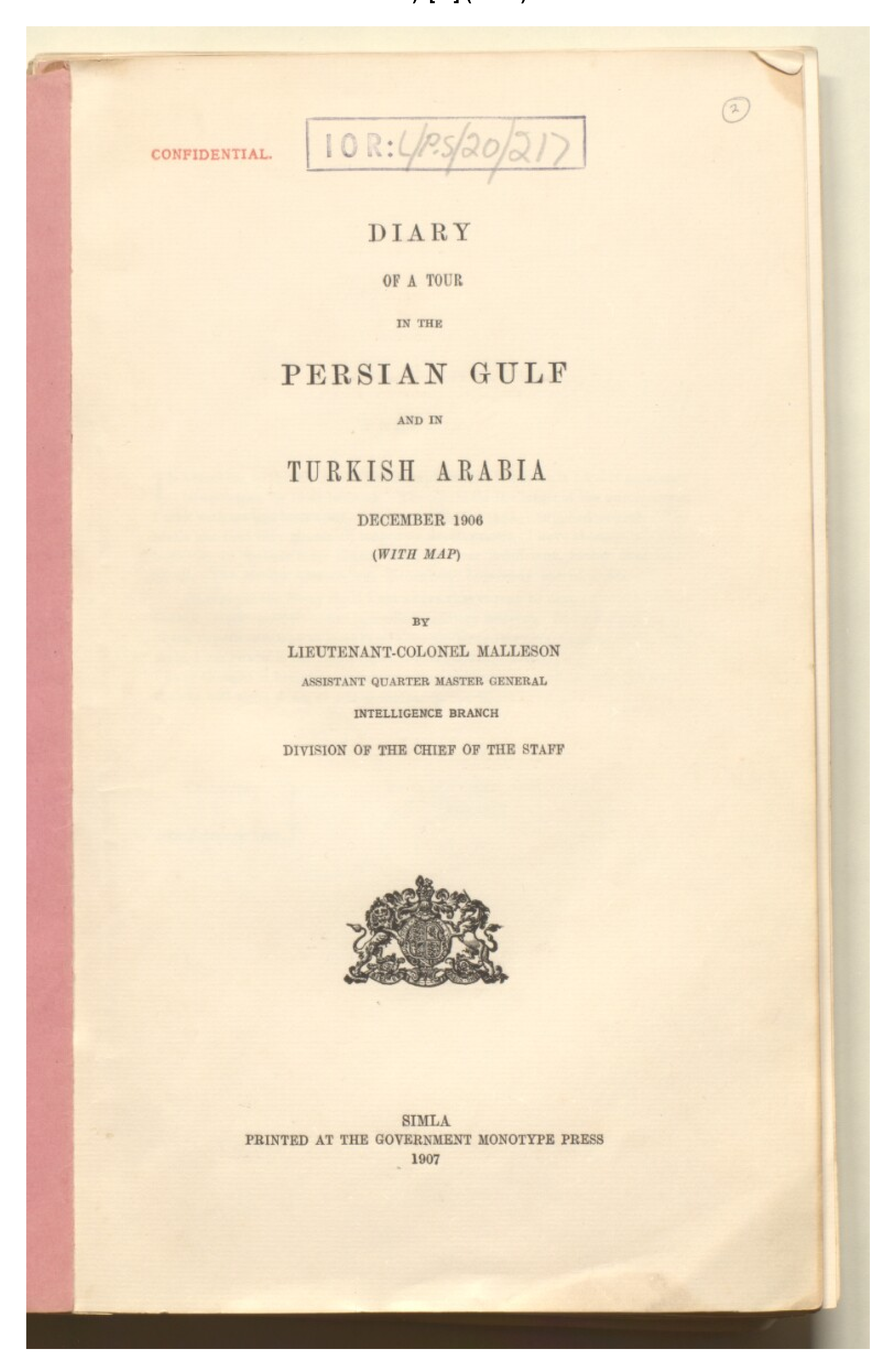
About this record

Wilfrid Malleson, *Diary of a Tour in the Persian Gulf and in Turkish Arabia* (Simla: Government Monotype Press, 1907). This is the diary of a tour in the Persian Gulf and Turkish Arabia by Lieutenant-Colonel Wilfrid Malleson, 7th-29th December, 1906. It describes his journey up the Persian Gulf from Muscat to Basra, Muhammerah [Khorramshahr], and onto Baghdad, including periods in quarantine stations as well as the competing shipping lines, types of boats, date trade, and life in Baghdad. Includes his description of life in Muscat for the British Consul and encounters with German and Russian diplomats.

Includes 53 annotated photographs (ff 23-50) of the journey including views of Baghdad, Basra, Ctesiphon, and Musandam as well as two maps (ff 51-52).


L/PS/20/C260
C. 260
CONFIDENTIAL.
DIARY
OF A TOUR
IN THE
PERSIAN GULF
AND IN
TURKISH ARABIA
DECEMBER 1906
(WITH MAP)
BY
LIEUTENANT-COLONEL MALLESON
ASSISTANT QUARTER MASTER GENERAL
INTELLIGENCE BRANCH
DIVISION OF THE CHIEF OF THE STAFF
SIMLA
PRINTED AT THE GOVERNMENT MONOTYPE PRESS
1907





CONFIDENTIAL.

(2)

DIARY

OF A TOUR

IN THE

PERSIAN GULF

AND IN

TURKISH ARABIA

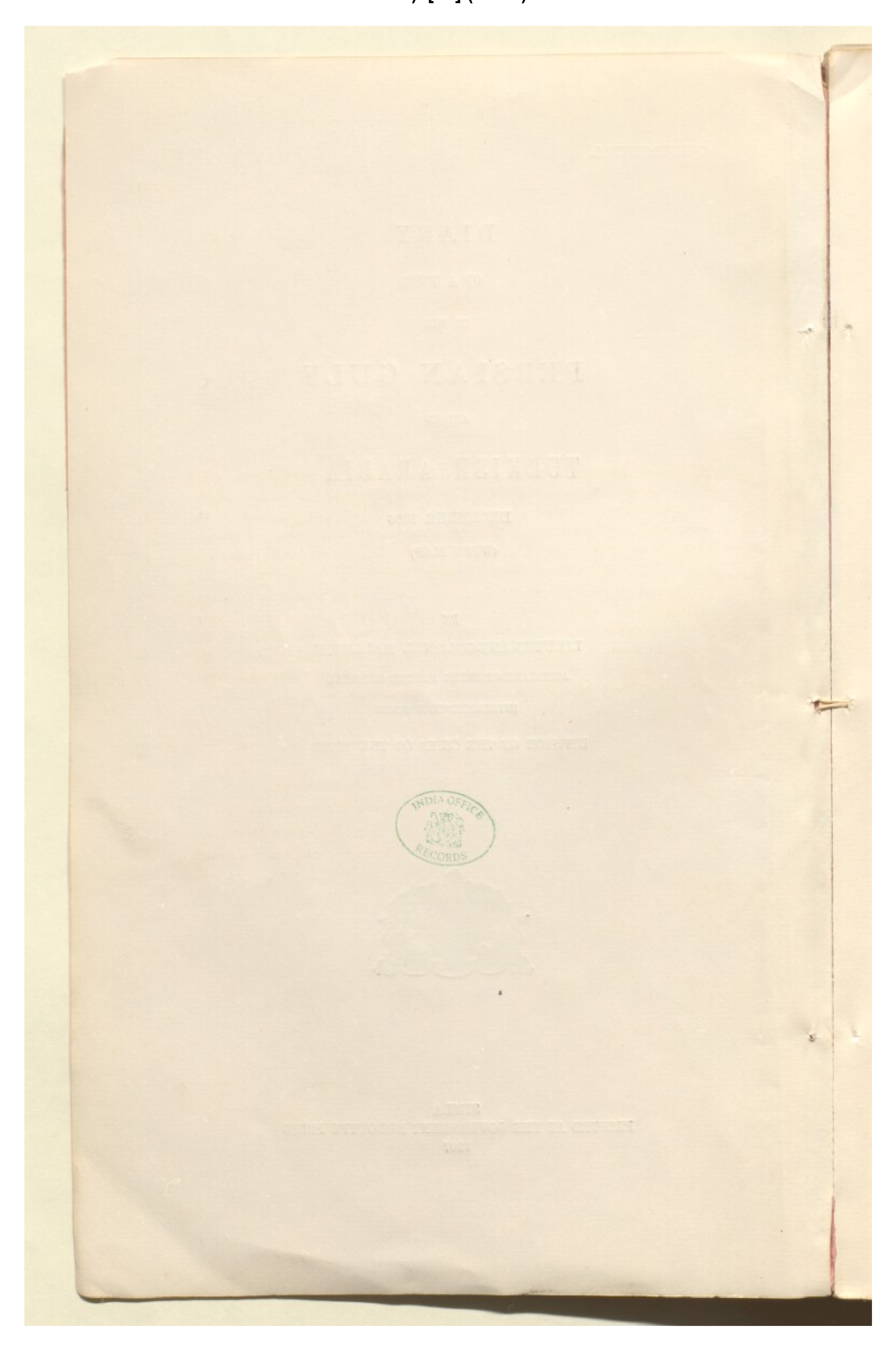
DECEMBER 1906

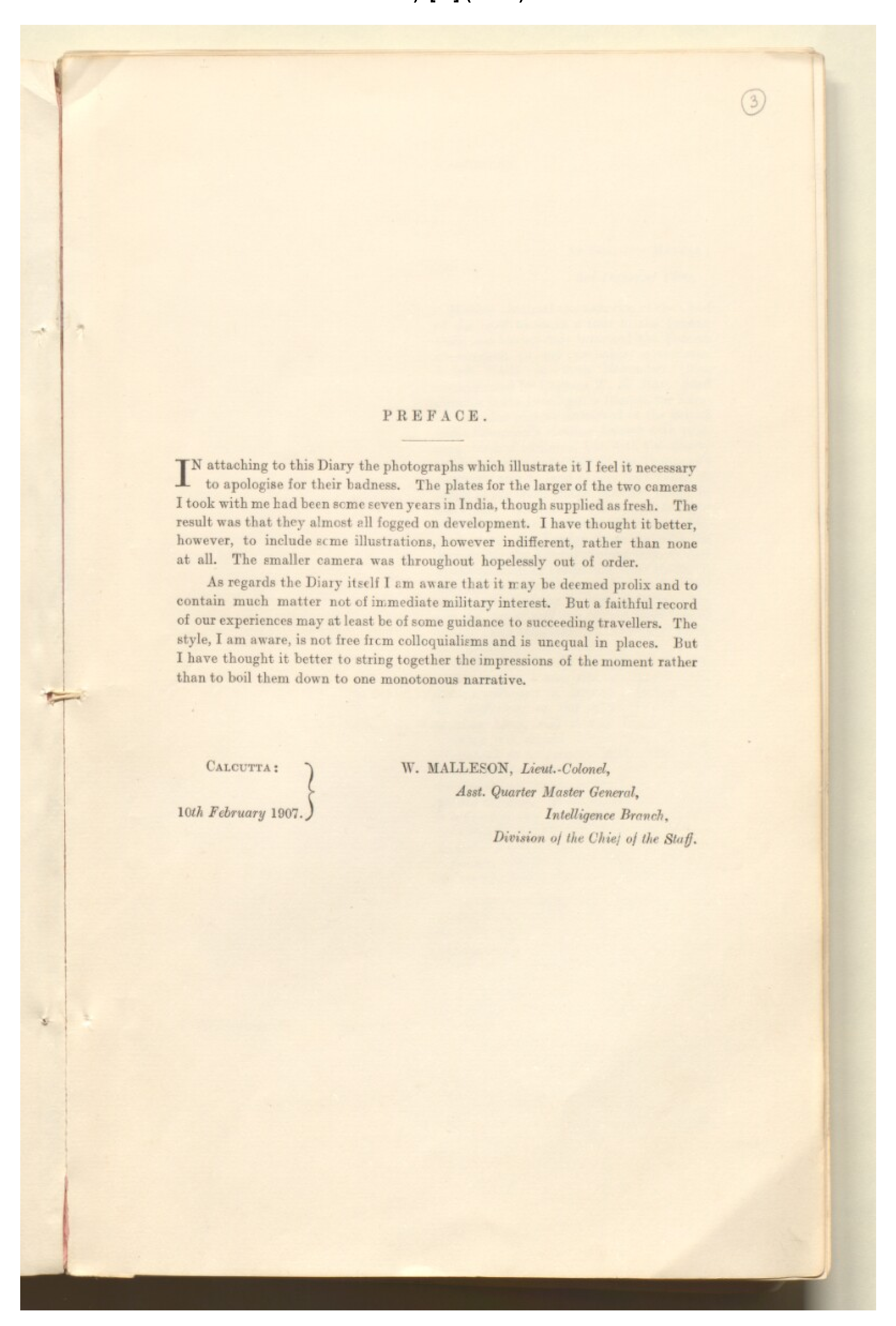
(*WITH MAP*)

BY

LIEUTENANT-COLONEL MALLESON
ASSISTANT QUARTER MASTER GENERAL
INTELLIGENCE BRANCH
DIVISION OF THE CHIEF OF THE STAFF

SIMLA
PRINTED AT THE GOVERNMENT MONOTYPE PRESS
1907


INDIA OFFICE
RECORDS



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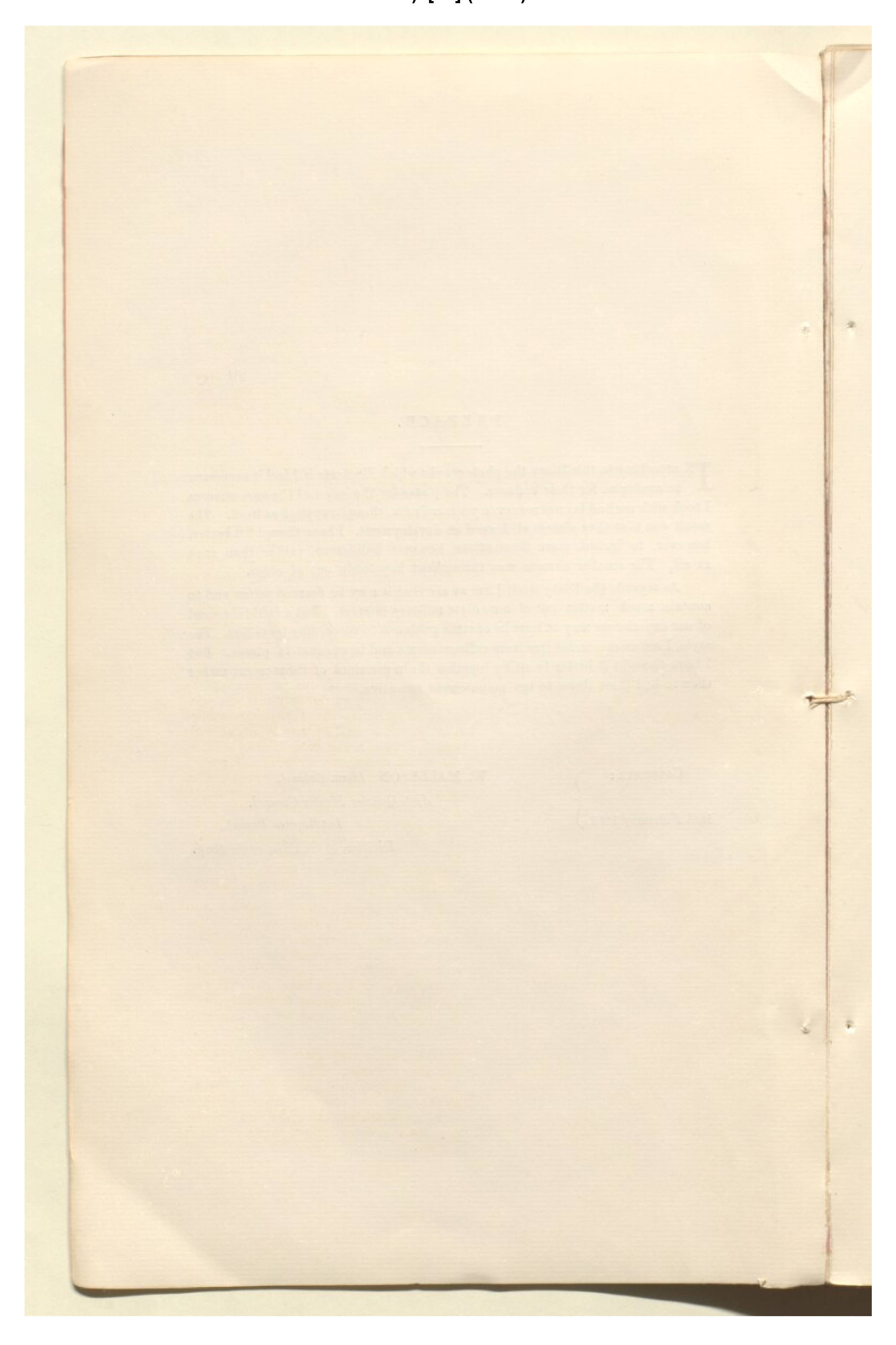
PREFACE.

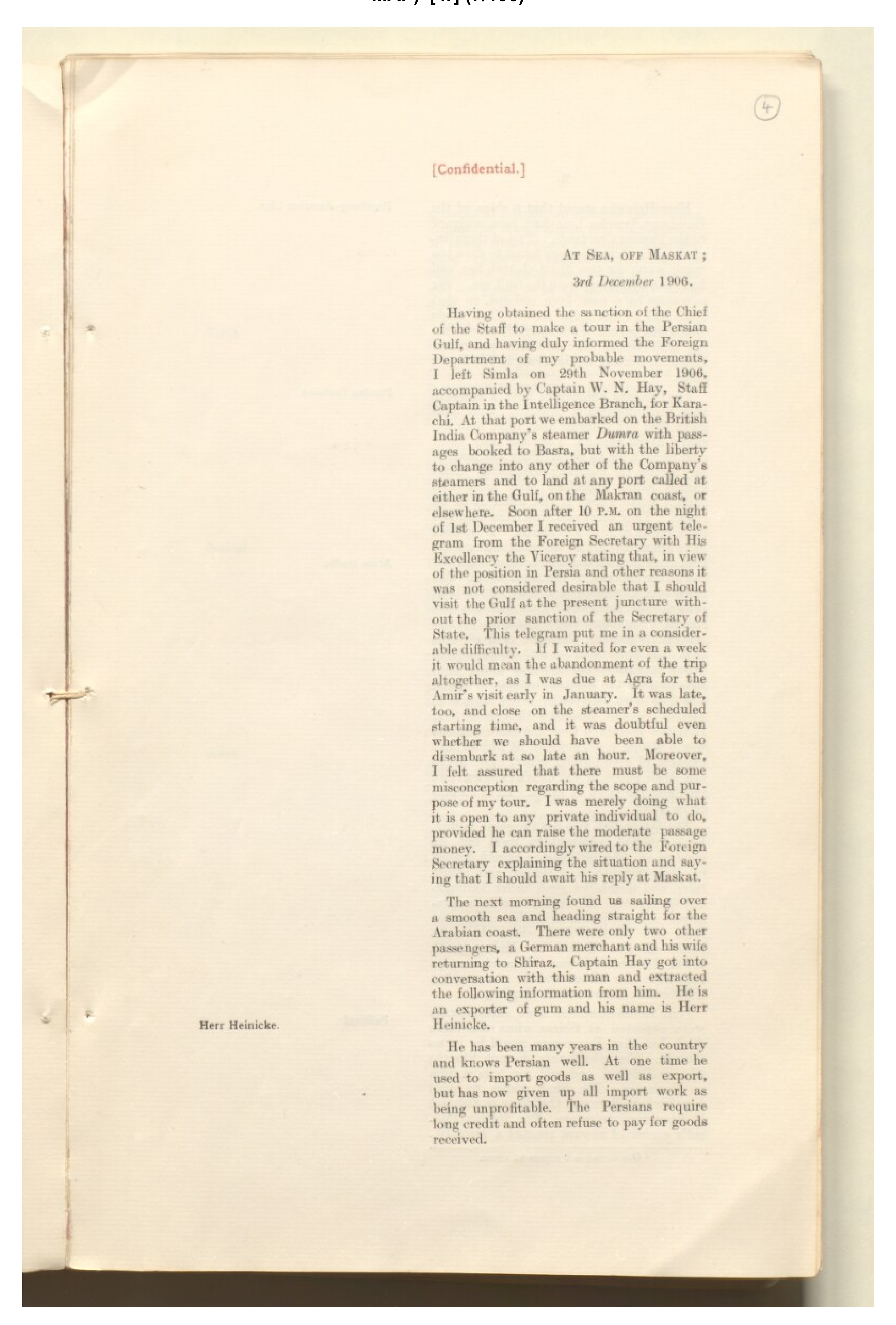
IN attaching to this Diary the photographs which illustrate it I feel it necessary to apologise for their badness. The plates for the larger of the two cameras I took with me had been some seven years in India, though supplied as fresh. The result was that they almost all fogged on development. I have thought it better, however, to include some illustrations, however indifferent, rather than none at all. The smaller camera was throughout hopelessly out of order.

As regards the Diary itself I am aware that it may be deemed prolix and to contain much matter not of immediate military interest. But a faithful record of our experiences may at least be of some guidance to succeeding travellers. The style, I am aware, is not free from colloquialisms and is unequal in places. But I have thought it better to string together the impressions of the moment rather than to boil them down to one monotonous narrative.

CALCUTTA:
10*th February* 1907.

W. MALLESON, *Lieut.-Colonel,*
Asst. Quarter Master General,
Intelligence Branch,
Division of the Chief of the Staff.





(4)

[Confidential.]

AT SEA, OFF MASKAT;

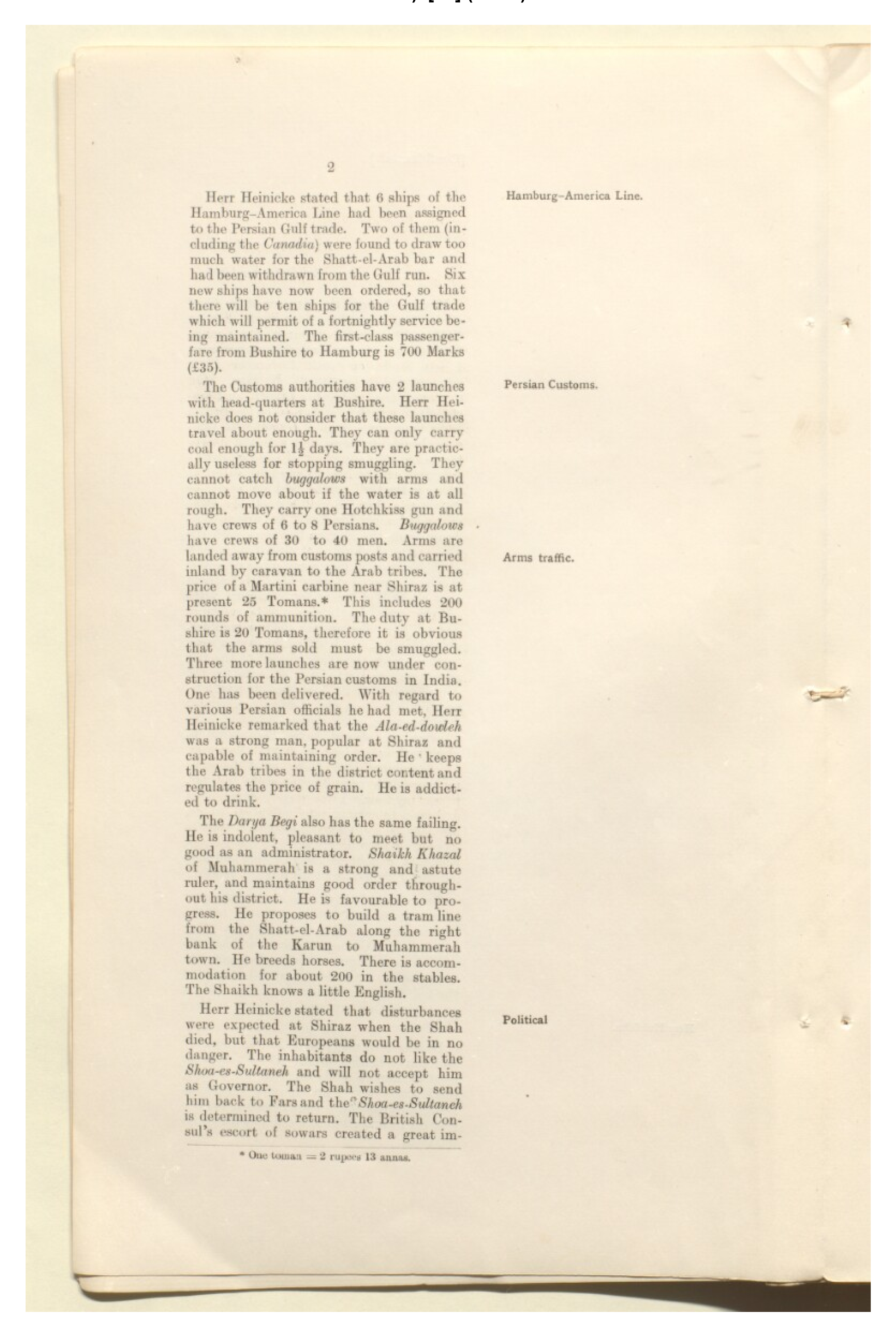
3rd December 1906.

Having obtained the sanction of the Chief of the Staff to make a tour in the Persian Gulf, and having duly informed the Foreign Department of my probable movements, I left Simla on 29th November 1906, accompanied by Captain W. N. Hay, Staff Captain in the Intelligence Branch, for Karachi. At that port we embarked on the British India Company's steamer *Dumra* with passages booked to Basra, but with the liberty to change into any other of the Company's steamers and to land at any port called at either in the Gulf, on the Makran coast, or elsewhere. Soon after 10 P.M. on the night of 1st December I received an urgent telegram from the Foreign Secretary with His Excellency the Viceroy stating that, in view of the position in Persia and other reasons it was not considered desirable that I should visit the Gulf at the present juncture without the prior sanction of the Secretary of State. This telegram put me in a considerable difficulty. If I waited for even a week it would mean the abandonment of the trip altogether, as I was due at Agra for the Amir's visit early in January. It was late, too, and close on the steamer's scheduled starting time, and it was doubtful even whether we should have been able to disembark at so late an hour. Moreover, I felt assured that there must be some misconception regarding the scope and purpose of my tour. I was merely doing what it is open to any private individual to do, provided he can raise the moderate passage money. I accordingly wired to the Foreign Secretary explaining the situation and saying that I should await his reply at Maskat.

Herr Heinicke.

The next morning found us sailing over a smooth sea and heading straight for the Arabian coast. There were only two other passengers, a German merchant and his wife returning to Shiraz. Captain Hay got into conversation with this man and extracted the following information from him. He is an exporter of gum and his name is Herr Heinicke.

He has been many years in the country and knows Persian well. At one time he used to import goods as well as export, but has now given up all import work as being unprofitable. The Persians require long credit and often refuse to pay for goods received.



Hamburg-America Line.

Herr Heinicke stated that 6 ships of the Hamburg-America Line had been assigned to the Persian Gulf trade. Two of them (including the *Canadia*) were found to draw too much water for the Shatt-el-Arab bar and had been withdrawn from the Gulf run. Six new ships have now been ordered, so that there will be ten ships for the Gulf trade which will permit of a fortnightly service being maintained. The first-class passenger-fare from Bushire to Hamburg is 700 Marks (£35).

Persian Customs.

The Customs authorities have 2 launches with head-quarters at Bushire. Herr Heinicke does not consider that these launches travel about enough. They can only carry coal enough for 1½ days. They are practically useless for stopping smuggling. They cannot catch *buggalows* with arms and cannot move about if the water is at all rough. They carry one Hotchkiss gun and have crews of 6 to 8 Persians. *Buggalows* have crews of 30 to 40 men. Arms are landed away from customs posts and carried inland by caravan to the Arab tribes. The price of a Martini carbine near Shiraz is at present 25 Tomans.* This includes 200 rounds of ammunition. The duty at Bushire is 20 Tomans, therefore it is obvious that the arms sold must be smuggled. Three more launches are now under construction for the Persian customs in India. One has been delivered. With regard to various Persian officials he had met, Herr Heinicke remarked that the *Ala-ed-dowleh* was a strong man, popular at Shiraz and capable of maintaining order. He keeps the Arab tribes in the district content and regulates the price of grain. He is addicted to drink.

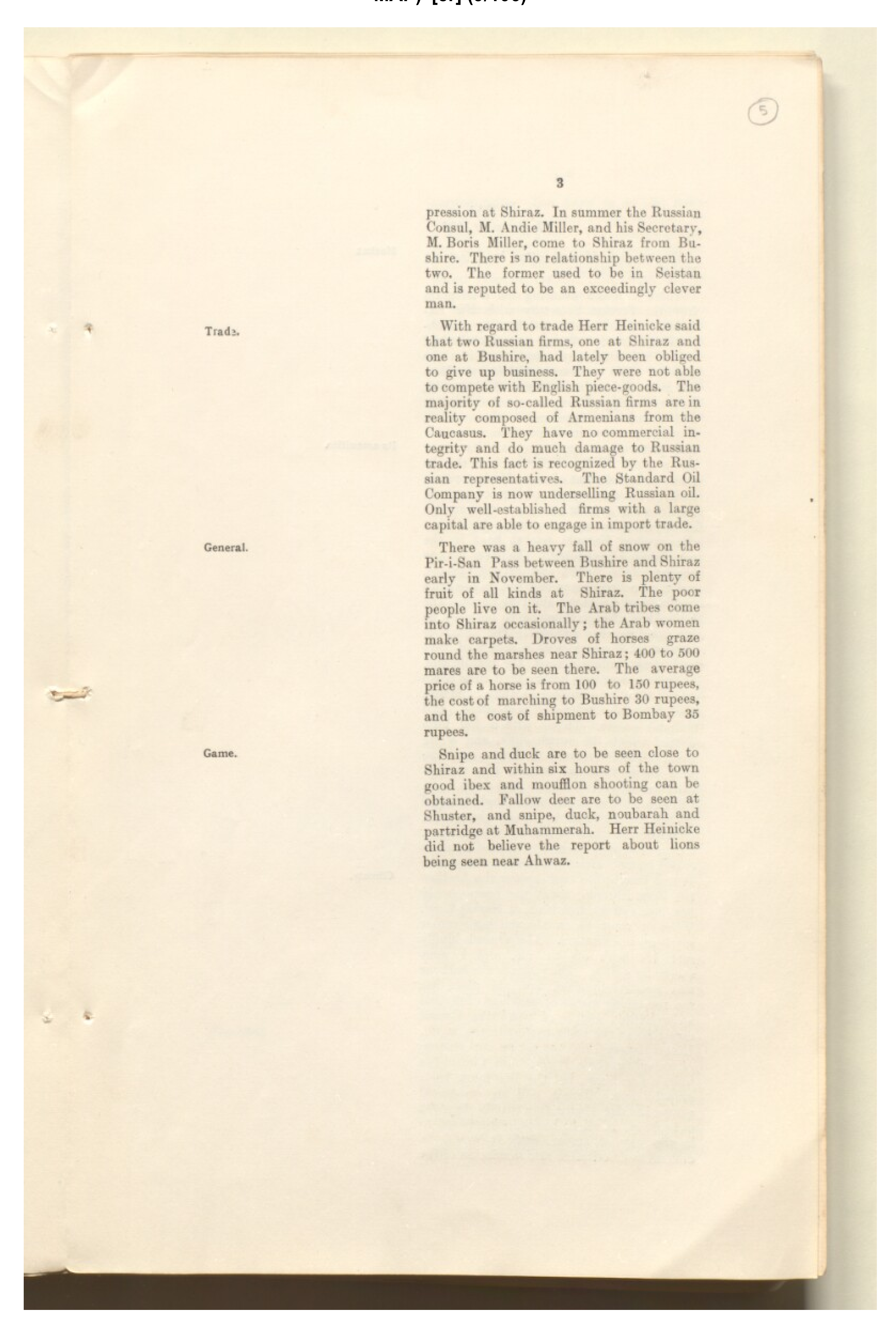
Arms traffic.

The *Darya Begi* also has the same failing. He is indolent, pleasant to meet but no good as an administrator. *Shaikh Khazal* of Muhammerah is a strong and astute ruler, and maintains good order throughout his district. He is favourable to progress. He proposes to build a tram line from the Shatt-el-Arab along the right bank of the Karun to Muhammerah town. He breeds horses. There is accommodation for about 200 in the stables. The Shaikh knows a little English.

Political

Herr Heinicke stated that disturbances were expected at Shiraz when the Shah died, but that Europeans would be in no danger. The inhabitants do not like the *Shoa-es-Sultaneh* and will not accept him as Governor. The Shah wishes to send him back to Fars and the *Shoa-es-Sultaneh* is determined to return. The British Consul's escort of sowars created a great im-

* One toman = 2 rupees 13 annas.



pression at Shiraz. In summer the Russian Consul, M. Andie Miller, and his Secretary, M. Boris Miller, come to Shiraz from Bushire. There is no relationship between the two. The former used to be in Seistan and is reputed to be an exceedingly clever man.

Trade.

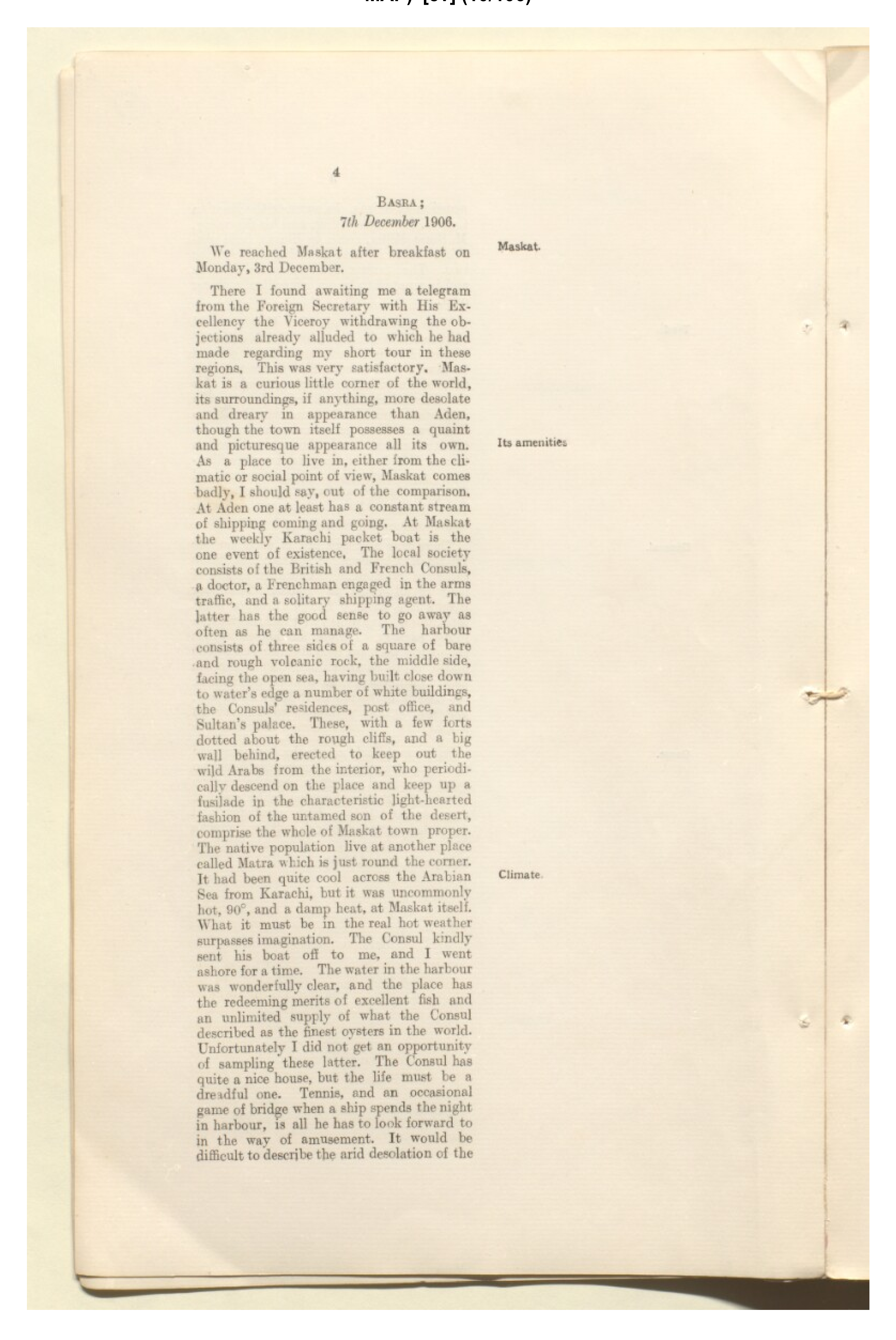
With regard to trade Herr Heinicke said that two Russian firms, one at Shiraz and one at Bushire, had lately been obliged to give up business. They were not able to compete with English piece-goods. The majority of so-called Russian firms are in reality composed of Armenians from the Caucasus. They have no commercial integrity and do much damage to Russian trade. This fact is recognized by the Russian representatives. The Standard Oil Company is now underselling Russian oil. Only well-established firms with a large capital are able to engage in import trade.

General.

There was a heavy fall of snow on the Pir-i-San Pass between Bushire and Shiraz early in November. There is plenty of fruit of all kinds at Shiraz. The poor people live on it. The Arab tribes come into Shiraz occasionally; the Arab women make carpets. Droves of horses graze round the marshes near Shiraz; 400 to 500 mares are to be seen there. The average price of a horse is from 100 to 150 rupees, the cost of marching to Bushire 30 rupees, and the cost of shipment to Bombay 35 rupees.

Game.

Snipe and duck are to be seen close to Shiraz and within six hours of the town good ibex and moufflon shooting can be obtained. Fallow deer are to be seen at Shuster, and snipe, duck, noubarah and partridge at Muhammerah. Herr Heinicke did not believe the report about lions being seen near Ahwaz.



BASRA;
7th December 1906.

Maskat.

We reached Maskat after breakfast on Monday, 3rd December.

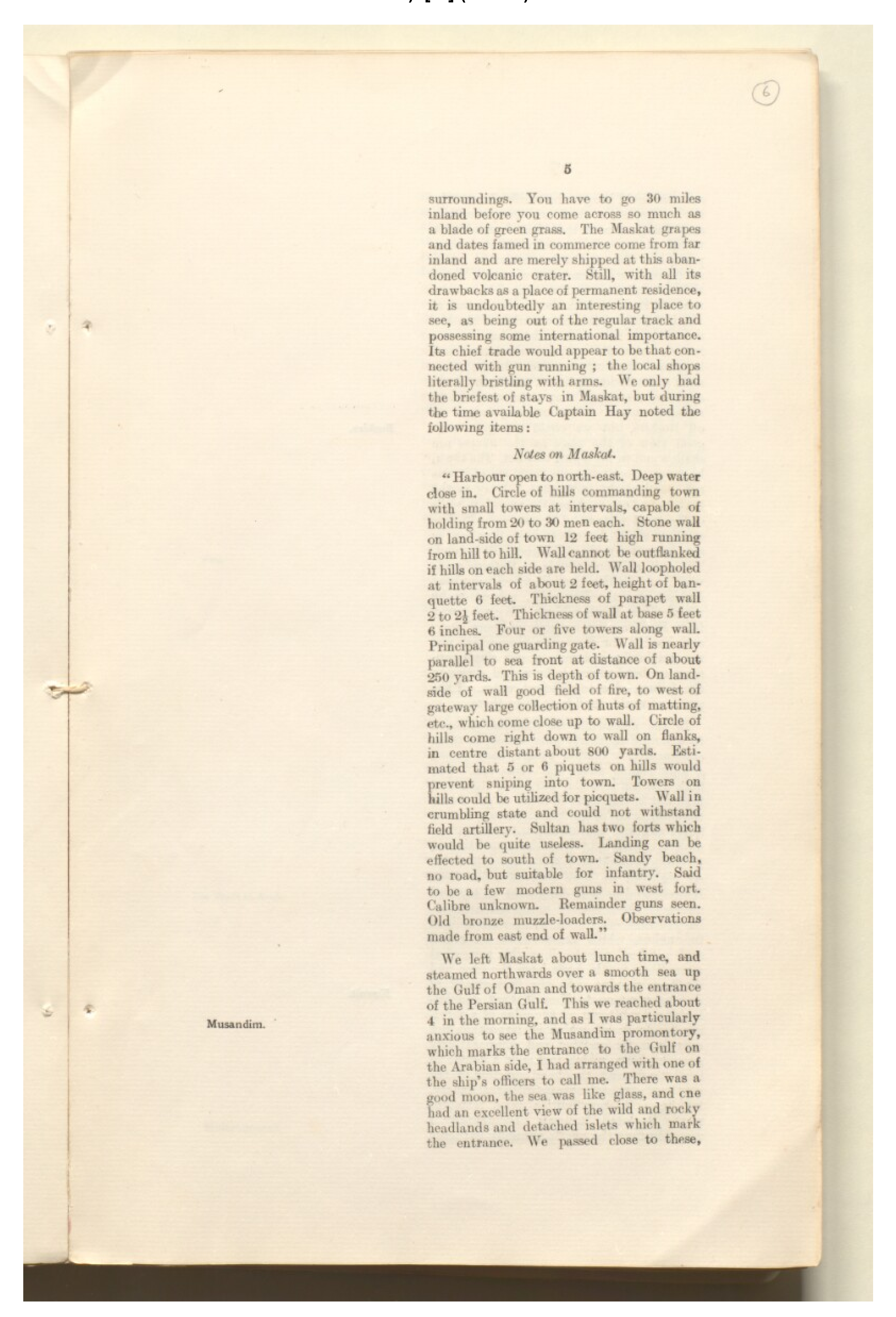
There I found awaiting me a telegram from the Foreign Secretary with His Excellency the Viceroy withdrawing the objections already alluded to which he had made regarding my short tour in these regions. This was very satisfactory. Maskat is a curious little corner of the world, its surroundings, if anything, more desolate and dreary in appearance than Aden, though the town itself possesses a quaint and picturesque appearance all its own.

Its amenities.

As a place to live in, either from the climatic or social point of view, Maskat comes badly, I should say, out of the comparison. At Aden one at least has a constant stream of shipping coming and going. At Maskat the weekly Karachi packet boat is the one event of existence. The local society consists of the British and French Consuls, a doctor, a Frenchman engaged in the arms traffic, and a solitary shipping agent. The latter has the good sense to go away as often as he can manage. The harbour consists of three sides of a square of bare and rough volcanic rock, the middle side, facing the open sea, having built close down to water's edge a number of white buildings, the Consuls' residences, post office, and Sultan's palace. These, with a few forts dotted about the rough cliffs, and a big wall behind, erected to keep out the wild Arabs from the interior, who periodically descend on the place and keep up a fusilade in the characteristic light-hearted fashion of the untamed son of the desert, comprise the whole of Maskat town proper. The native population live at another place called Matra which is just round the corner.

Climate.

It had been quite cool across the Arabian Sea from Karachi, but it was uncommonly hot, 90°, and a damp heat, at Maskat itself. What it must be in the real hot weather surpasses imagination. The Consul kindly sent his boat off to me, and I went ashore for a time. The water in the harbour was wonderfully clear, and the place has the redeeming merits of excellent fish and an unlimited supply of what the Consul described as the finest oysters in the world. Unfortunately I did not get an opportunity of sampling these latter. The Consul has quite a nice house, but the life must be a dreadful one. Tennis, and an occasional game of bridge when a ship spends the night in harbour, is all he has to look forward to in the way of amusement. It would be difficult to describe the arid desolation of the



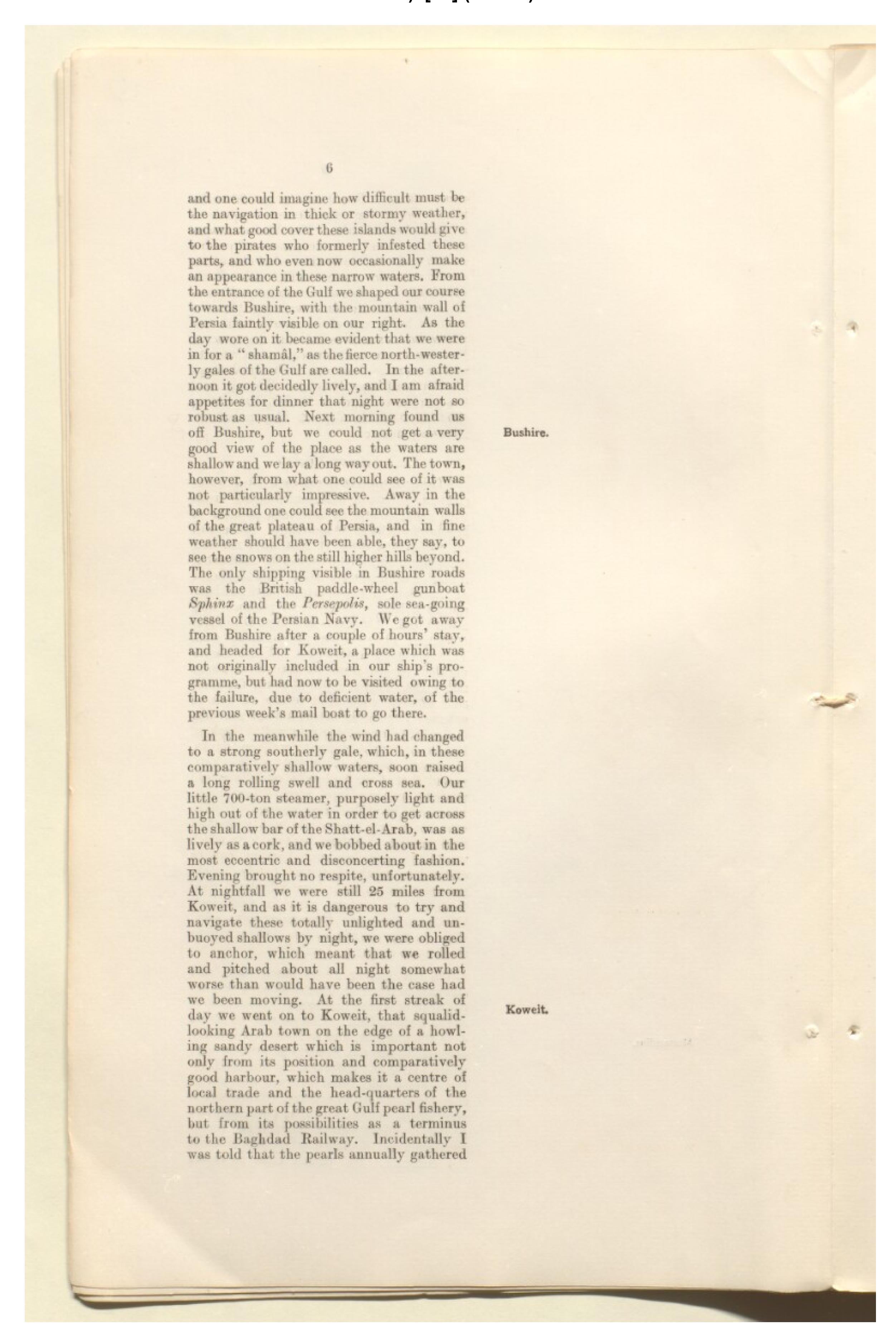
surroundings. You have to go 30 miles inland before you come across so much as a blade of green grass. The Maskat grapes and dates famed in commerce come from far inland and are merely shipped at this abandoned volcanic crater. Still, with all its drawbacks as a place of permanent residence, it is undoubtedly an interesting place to see, as being out of the regular track and possessing some international importance. Its chief trade would appear to be that connected with gun running ; the local shops literally bristling with arms. We only had the briefest of stays in Maskat, but during the time available Captain Hay noted the following items :

Notes on Maskat.

"Harbour open to north-east. Deep water close in. Circle of hills commanding town with small towers at intervals, capable of holding from 20 to 30 men each. Stone wall on land-side of town 12 feet high running from hill to hill. Wall cannot be outflanked if hills on each side are held. Wall loopholed at intervals of about 2 feet, height of banquette 6 feet. Thickness of parapet wall 2 to 2½ feet. Thickness of wall at base 5 feet 6 inches. Four or five towers along wall. Principal one guarding gate. Wall is nearly parallel to sea front at distance of about 250 yards. This is depth of town. On land-side of wall good field of fire, to west of gateway large collection of huts of matting, etc., which come close up to wall. Circle of hills come right down to wall on flanks, in centre distant about 800 yards. Estimated that 5 or 6 piquets on hills would prevent sniping into town. Towers on hills could be utilized for picquets. Wall in crumbling state and could not withstand field artillery. Sultan has two forts which would be quite useless. Landing can be effected to south of town. Sandy beach, no road, but suitable for infantry. Said to be a few modern guns in west fort. Calibre unknown. Remainder guns seen. Old bronze muzzle-loaders. Observations made from east end of wall."

Musandim.

We left Maskat about lunch time, and steamed northwards over a smooth sea up the Gulf of Oman and towards the entrance of the Persian Gulf. This we reached about 4 in the morning, and as I was particularly anxious to see the Musandim promontory, which marks the entrance to the Gulf on the Arabian side, I had arranged with one of the ship's officers to call me. There was a good moon, the sea was like glass, and one had an excellent view of the wild and rocky headlands and detached islets which mark the entrance. We passed close to these,

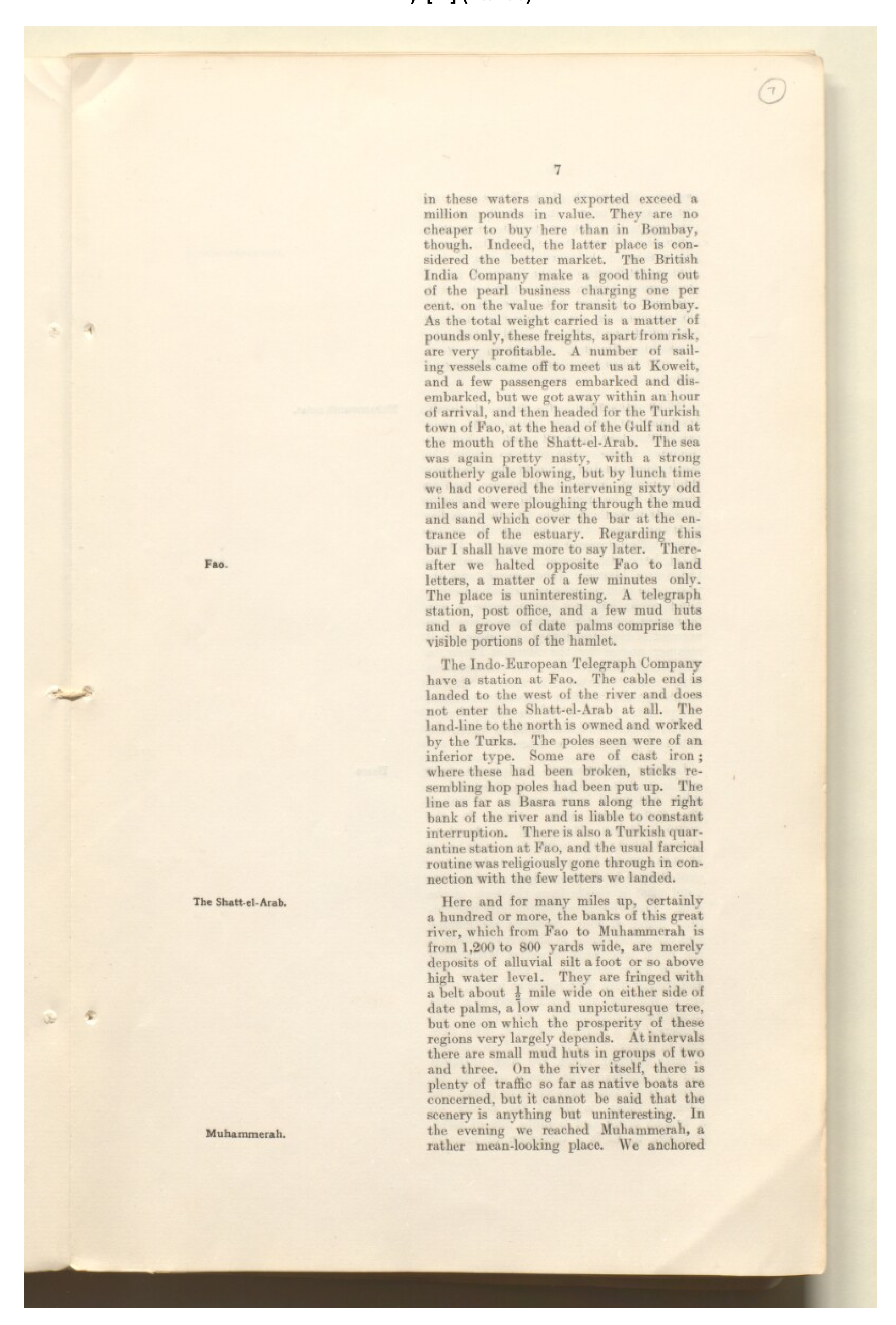


and one could imagine how difficult must be the navigation in thick or stormy weather, and what good cover these islands would give to the pirates who formerly infested these parts, and who even now occasionally make an appearance in these narrow waters. From the entrance of the Gulf we shaped our course towards Bushire, with the mountain wall of Persia faintly visible on our right. As the day wore on it became evident that we were in for a "shamâl," as the fierce north-westerly gales of the Gulf are called. In the afternoon it got decidedly lively, and I am afraid appetites for dinner that night were not so robust as usual. Next morning found us off Bushire, but we could not get a very good view of the place as the waters are shallow and we lay a long way out. The town, however, from what one could see of it was not particularly impressive. Away in the background one could see the mountain walls of the great plateau of Persia, and in fine weather should have been able, they say, to see the snows on the still higher hills beyond. The only shipping visible in Bushire roads was the British paddle-wheel gunboat *Sphinx* and the *Persepolis*, sole sea-going vessel of the Persian Navy. We got away from Bushire after a couple of hours' stay, and headed for Koweit, a place which was not originally included in our ship's programme, but had now to be visited owing to the failure, due to deficient water, of the previous week's mail boat to go there.

Bushire.

In the meanwhile the wind had changed to a strong southerly gale, which, in these comparatively shallow waters, soon raised a long rolling swell and cross sea. Our little 700-ton steamer, purposely light and high out of the water in order to get across the shallow bar of the Shatt-el-Arab, was as lively as a cork, and we bobbed about in the most eccentric and disconcerting fashion. Evening brought no respite, unfortunately. At nightfall we were still 25 miles from Koweit, and as it is dangerous to try and navigate these totally unlighted and unbuoyed shallows by night, we were obliged to anchor, which meant that we rolled and pitched about all night somewhat worse than would have been the case had we been moving. At the first streak of day we went on to Koweit, that squalid-looking Arab town on the edge of a howling sandy desert which is important not only from its position and comparatively good harbour, which makes it a centre of local trade and the head-quarters of the northern part of the great Gulf pearl fishery, but from its possibilities as a terminus to the Baghdad Railway. Incidentally I was told that the pearls annually gathered

Koweit.



(7)

in these waters and exported exceed a million pounds in value. They are no cheaper to buy here than in Bombay, though. Indeed, the latter place is considered the better market. The British India Company make a good thing out of the pearl business charging one per cent. on the value for transit to Bombay. As the total weight carried is a matter of pounds only, these freights, apart from risk, are very profitable. A number of sailing vessels came off to meet us at Koweit, and a few passengers embarked and disembarked, but we got away within an hour of arrival, and then headed for the Turkish town of Fao, at the head of the Gulf and at the mouth of the Shatt-el-Arab. The sea was again pretty nasty, with a strong southerly gale blowing, but by lunch time we had covered the intervening sixty odd miles and were ploughing through the mud and sand which cover the bar at the entrance of the estuary. Regarding this bar I shall have more to say later. Thereafter we halted opposite Fao to land letters, a matter of a few minutes only. The place is uninteresting. A telegraph station, post office, and a few mud huts and a grove of date palms comprise the visible portions of the hamlet.

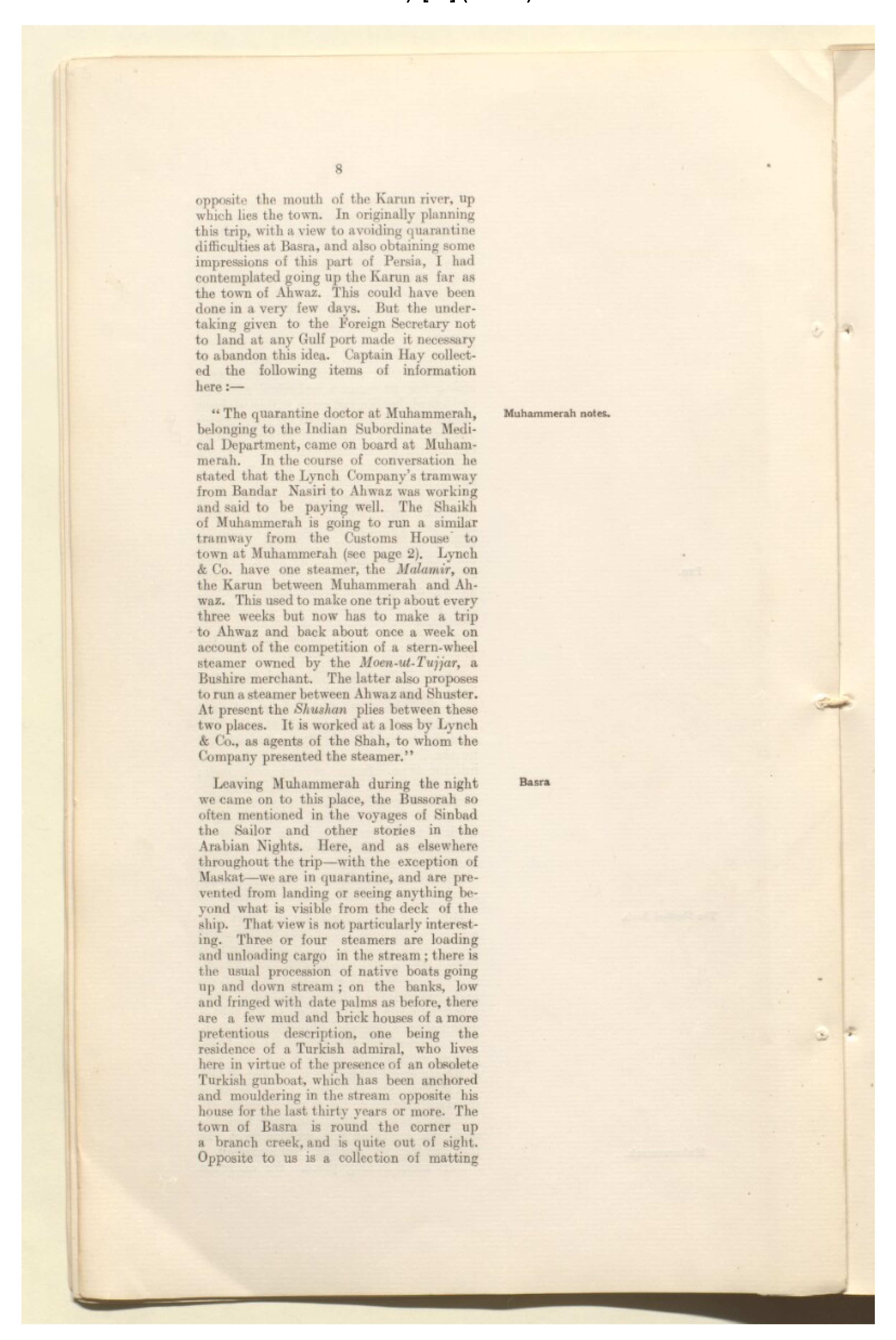
Fao.

The Indo-European Telegraph Company have a station at Fao. The cable end is landed to the west of the river and does not enter the Shatt-el-Arab at all. The land-line to the north is owned and worked by the Turks. The poles seen were of an inferior type. Some are of cast iron; where these had been broken, sticks resembling hop poles had been put up. The line as far as Basra runs along the right bank of the river and is liable to constant interruption. There is also a Turkish quarantine station at Fao, and the usual farcical routine was religiously gone through in connection with the few letters we landed.

The Shatt-el-Arab.

Here and for many miles up, certainly a hundred or more, the banks of this great river, which from Fao to Muhammerah is from 1,200 to 800 yards wide, are merely deposits of alluvial silt a foot or so above high water level. They are fringed with a belt about ½ mile wide on either side of date palms, a low and unpicturesque tree, but one on which the prosperity of these regions very largely depends. At intervals there are small mud huts in groups of two and three. On the river itself, there is plenty of traffic so far as native boats are concerned, but it cannot be said that the scenery is anything but uninteresting. In the evening we reached Muhammerah, a rather mean-looking place. We anchored

Muhammerah.



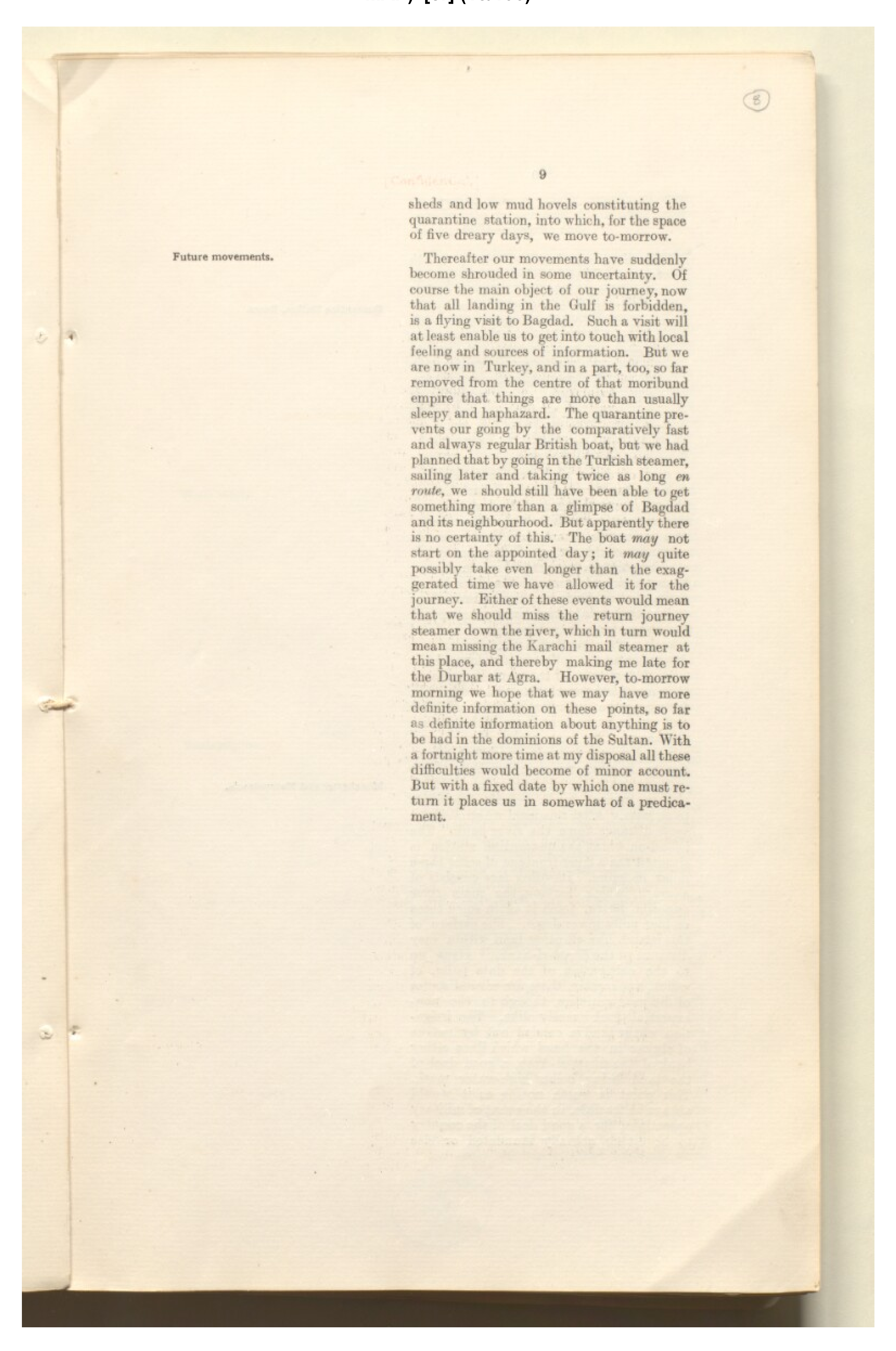
opposite the mouth of the Karun river, up which lies the town. In originally planning this trip, with a view to avoiding quarantine difficulties at Basra, and also obtaining some impressions of this part of Persia, I had contemplated going up the Karun as far as the town of Ahwaz. This could have been done in a very few days. But the undertaking given to the Foreign Secretary not to land at any Gulf port made it necessary to abandon this idea. Captain Hay collected the following items of information here:—

Muhammerah notes.

"The quarantine doctor at Muhammerah, belonging to the Indian Subordinate Medical Department, came on board at Muhammerah. In the course of conversation he stated that the Lynch Company's tramway from Bandar Nasiri to Ahwaz was working and said to be paying well. The Shaikh of Muhammerah is going to run a similar tramway from the Customs House to town at Muhammerah (see page 2). Lynch & Co. have one steamer, the *Malamir*, on the Karun between Muhammerah and Ahwaz. This used to make one trip about every three weeks but now has to make a trip to Ahwaz and back about once a week on account of the competition of a stern-wheel steamer owned by the *Moen-ut-Tujjar*, a Bushire merchant. The latter also proposes to run a steamer between Ahwaz and Shuster. At present the *Shushan* plies between these two places. It is worked at a loss by Lynch & Co., as agents of the Shah, to whom the Company presented the steamer."

Basra

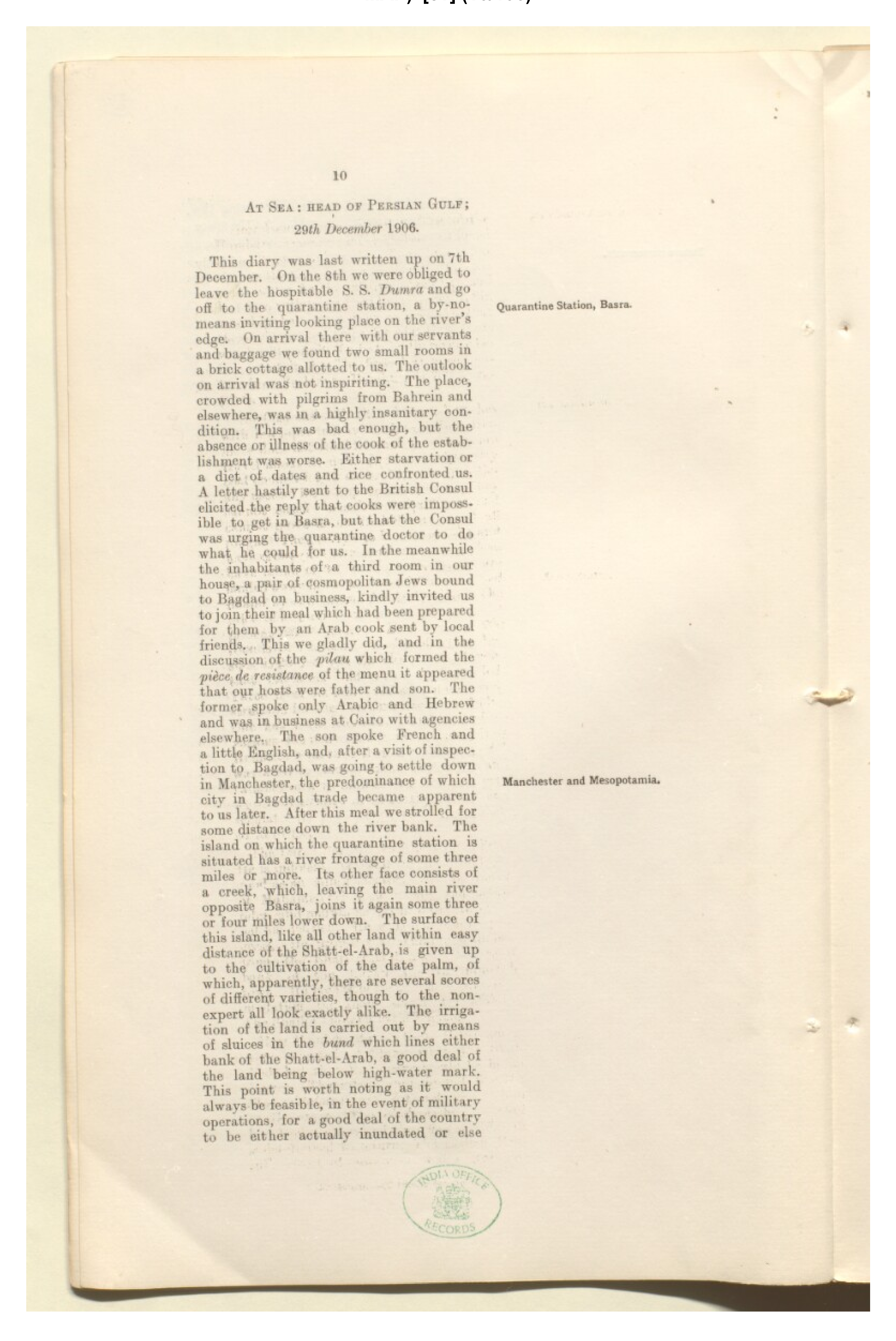
Leaving Muhammerah during the night we came on to this place, the Bussorah so often mentioned in the voyages of Sinbad the Sailor and other stories in the Arabian Nights. Here, and as elsewhere throughout the trip—with the exception of Maskat—we are in quarantine, and are prevented from landing or seeing anything beyond what is visible from the deck of the ship. That view is not particularly interesting. Three or four steamers are loading and unloading cargo in the stream; there is the usual procession of native boats going up and down stream; on the banks, low and fringed with date palms as before, there are a few mud and brick houses of a more pretentious description, one being the residence of a Turkish admiral, who lives here in virtue of the presence of an obsolete Turkish gunboat, which has been anchored and mouldering in the stream opposite his house for the last thirty years or more. The town of Basra is round the corner up a branch creek, and is quite out of sight. Opposite to us is a collection of matting



sheds and low mud hovels constituting the quarantine station, into which, for the space of five dreary days, we move to-morrow.

Future movements.

Thereafter our movements have suddenly become shrouded in some uncertainty. Of course the main object of our journey, now that all landing in the Gulf is forbidden, is a flying visit to Bagdad. Such a visit will at least enable us to get into touch with local feeling and sources of information. But we are now in Turkey, and in a part, too, so far removed from the centre of that moribund empire that things are more than usually sleepy and haphazard. The quarantine prevents our going by the comparatively fast and always regular British boat, but we had planned that by going in the Turkish steamer, sailing later and taking twice as long *en route*, we should still have been able to get something more than a glimpse of Bagdad and its neighbourhood. But apparently there is no certainty of this. The boat *may* not start on the appointed day; it *may* quite possibly take even longer than the exaggerated time we have allowed it for the journey. Either of these events would mean that we should miss the return journey steamer down the river, which in turn would mean missing the Karachi mail steamer at this place, and thereby making me late for the Durbar at Agra. However, to-morrow morning we hope that we may have more definite information on these points, so far as definite information about anything is to be had in the dominions of the Sultan. With a fortnight more time at my disposal all these difficulties would become of minor account. But with a fixed date by which one must return it places us in somewhat of a predicament.

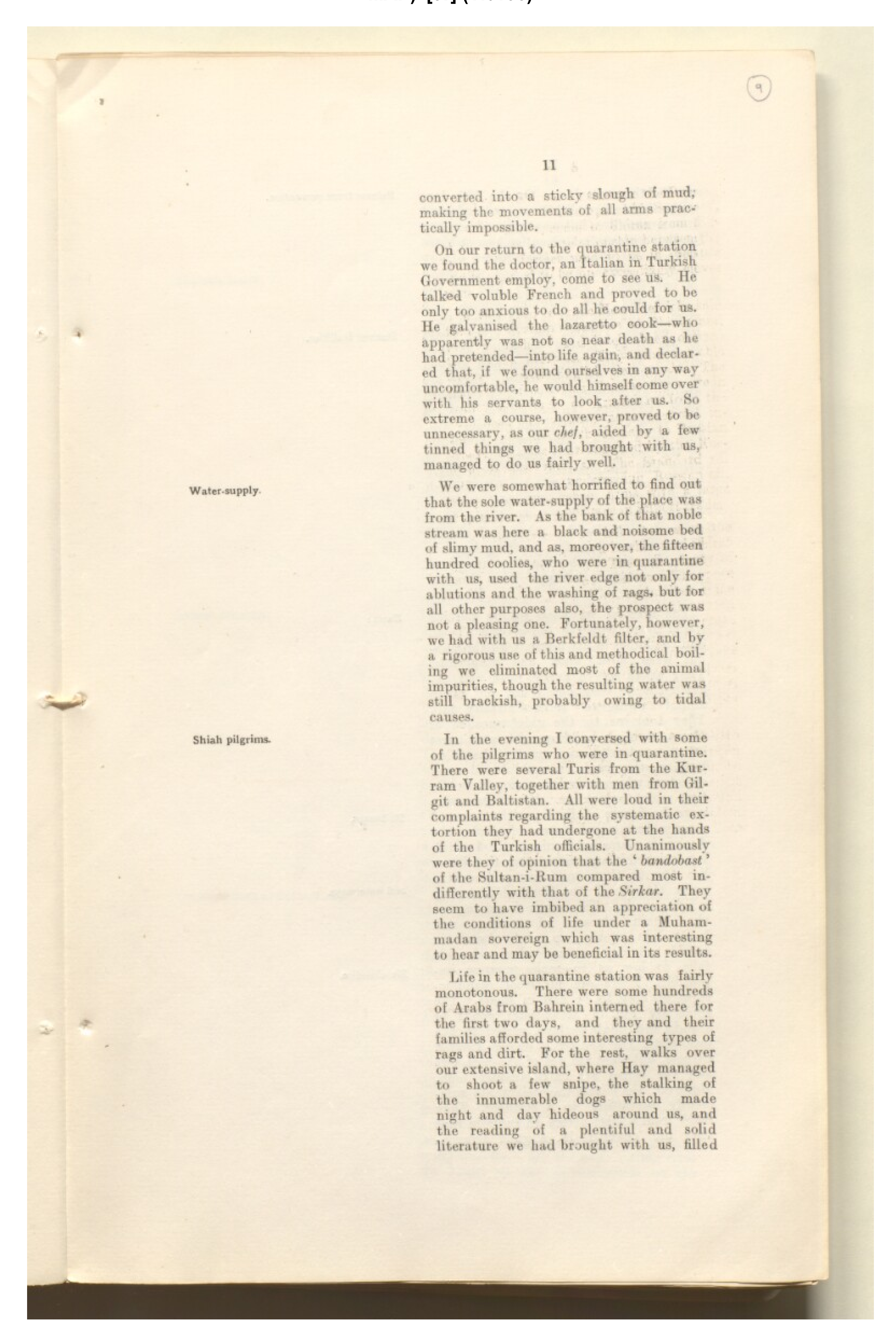


AT SEA: HEAD OF PERSIAN GULF;
29th December 1906.

Quarantine Station, Basra.

This diary was last written up on 7th December. On the 8th we were obliged to leave the hospitable S. S. *Dumra* and go off to the quarantine station, a by-no-means inviting looking place on the river's edge. On arrival there with our servants and baggage we found two small rooms in a brick cottage allotted to us. The outlook on arrival was not inspiriting. The place, crowded with pilgrims from Bahrein and elsewhere, was in a highly insanitary condition. This was bad enough, but the absence or illness of the cook of the establishment was worse. Either starvation or a diet of dates and rice confronted us. A letter hastily sent to the British Consul elicited the reply that cooks were impossible to get in Basra, but that the Consul was urging the quarantine doctor to do what he could for us. In the meanwhile the inhabitants of a third room in our house, a pair of cosmopolitan Jews bound to Bagdad on business, kindly invited us to join their meal which had been prepared for them by an Arab cook sent by local friends. This we gladly did, and in the discussion of the *pilau* which formed the *pièce de resistance* of the menu it appeared that our hosts were father and son. The former spoke only Arabic and Hebrew and was in business at Cairo with agencies elsewhere. The son spoke French and a little English, and, after a visit of inspection to Bagdad, was going to settle down in Manchester, the predominance of which city in Bagdad trade became apparent to us later. After this meal we strolled for some distance down the river bank. The island on which the quarantine station is situated has a river frontage of some three miles or more. Its other face consists of a creek, which, leaving the main river opposite Basra, joins it again some three or four miles lower down. The surface of this island, like all other land within easy distance of the Shatt-el-Arab, is given up to the cultivation of the date palm, of which, apparently, there are several scores of different varieties, though to the non-expert all look exactly alike. The irrigation of the land is carried out by means of sluices in the *bund* which lines either bank of the Shatt-el-Arab, a good deal of the land being below high-water mark. This point is worth noting as it would always be feasible, in the event of military operations, for a good deal of the country to be either actually inundated or else

Manchester and Mesopotamia.



converted into a sticky slough of mud, making the movements of all arms practically impossible.

On our return to the quarantine station we found the doctor, an Italian in Turkish Government employ, come to see us. He talked voluble French and proved to be only too anxious to do all he could for us. He galvanised the lazaretto cook—who apparently was not so near death as he had pretended—into life again, and declared that, if we found ourselves in any way uncomfortable, he would himself come over with his servants to look after us. So extreme a course, however, proved to be unnecessary, as our *chef*, aided by a few tinned things we had brought with us, managed to do us fairly well.

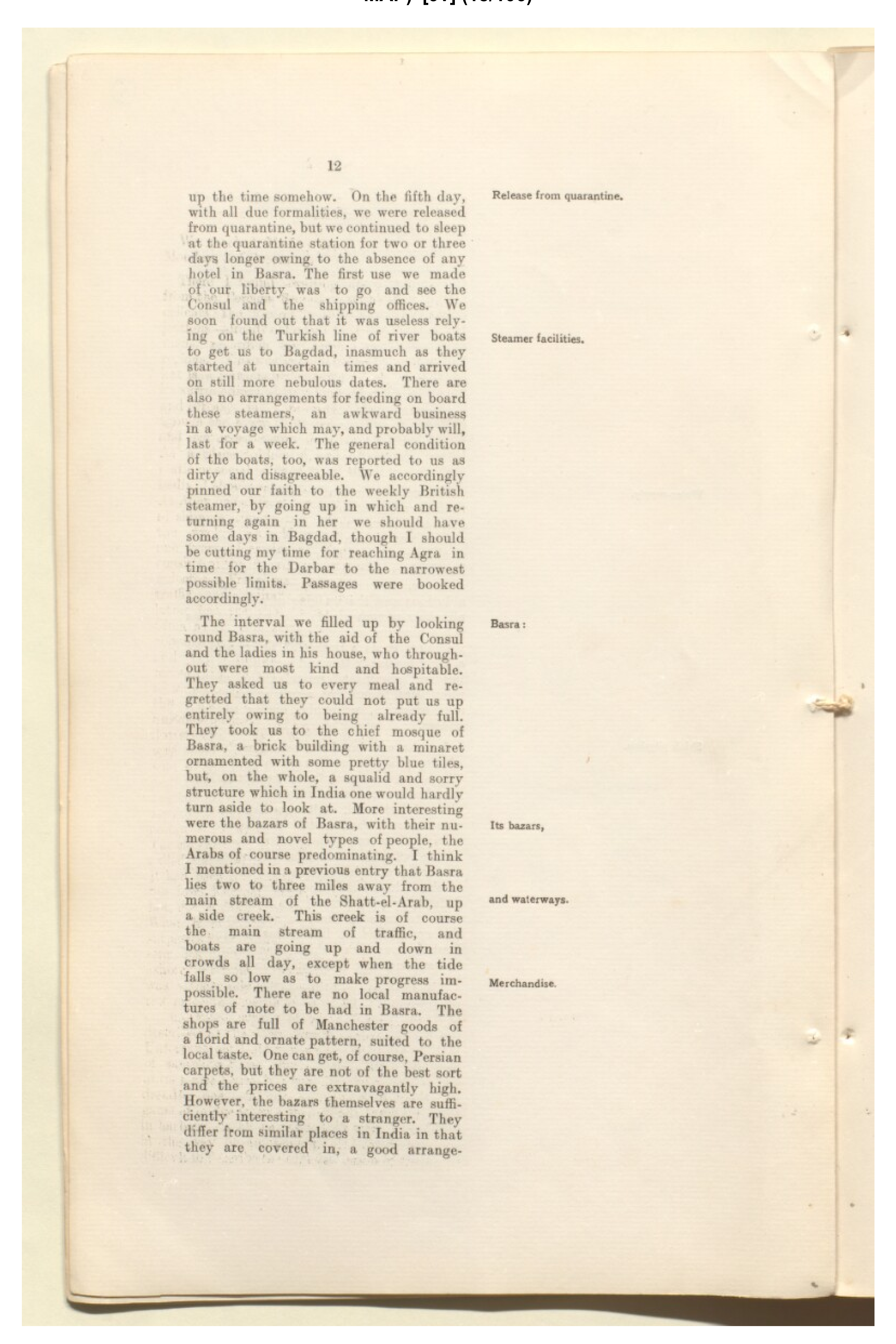
Water-supply.

We were somewhat horrified to find out that the sole water-supply of the place was from the river. As the bank of that noble stream was here a black and noisome bed of slimy mud, and as, moreover, the fifteen hundred coolies, who were in quarantine with us, used the river edge not only for ablutions and the washing of rags, but for all other purposes also, the prospect was not a pleasing one. Fortunately, however, we had with us a Berkfeldt filter, and by a rigorous use of this and methodical boiling we eliminated most of the animal impurities, though the resulting water was still brackish, probably owing to tidal causes.

Shiah pilgrims.

In the evening I conversed with some of the pilgrims who were in quarantine. There were several Turis from the Kurram Valley, together with men from Gilgit and Baltistan. All were loud in their complaints regarding the systematic extortion they had undergone at the hands of the Turkish officials. Unanimously were they of opinion that the '*bandobast*' of the Sultan-i-Rum compared most indifferently with that of the *Sirkar*. They seem to have imbibed an appreciation of the conditions of life under a Muhammadan sovereign which was interesting to hear and may be beneficial in its results.

Life in the quarantine station was fairly monotonous. There were some hundreds of Arabs from Bahrein interned there for the first two days, and they and their families afforded some interesting types of rags and dirt. For the rest, walks over our extensive island, where Hay managed to shoot a few snipe, the stalking of the innumerable dogs which made night and day hideous around us, and the reading of a plentiful and solid literature we had brought with us, filled



Release from quarantine.

up the time somehow. On the fifth day, with all due formalities, we were released from quarantine, but we continued to sleep at the quarantine station for two or three days longer owing to the absence of any hotel in Basra. The first use we made of our liberty was to go and see the Consul and the shipping offices. We soon found out that it was useless relying on the Turkish line of river boats to get us to Bagdad, inasmuch as they started at uncertain times and arrived on still more nebulous dates. There are also no arrangements for feeding on board these steamers, an awkward business in a voyage which may, and probably will, last for a week. The general condition of the boats, too, was reported to us as dirty and disagreeable. We accordingly pinned our faith to the weekly British steamer, by going up in which and returning again in her we should have some days in Bagdad, though I should be cutting my time for reaching Agra in time for the Darbar to the narrowest possible limits. Passages were booked accordingly.

Steamer facilities.

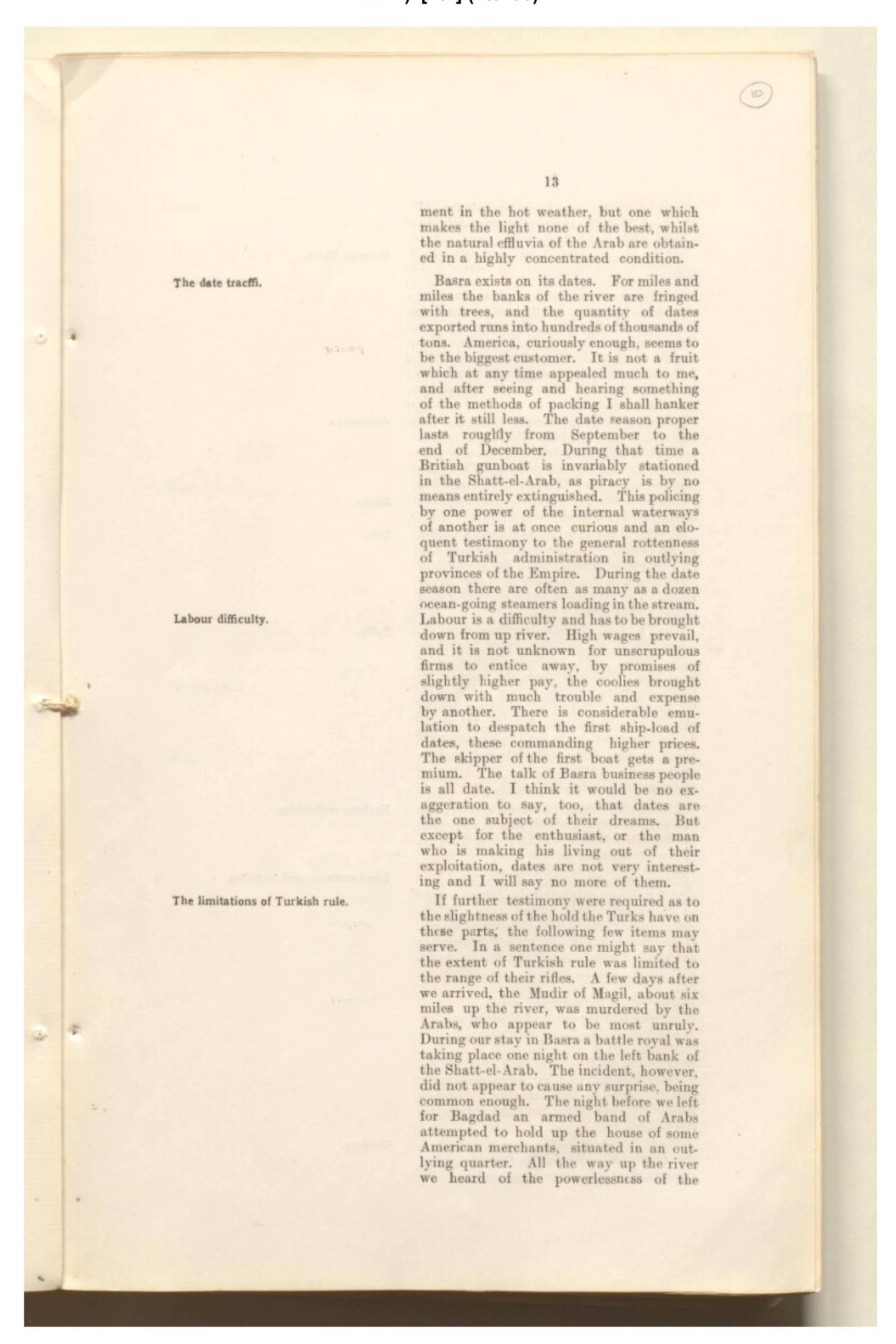
Basra:

The interval we filled up by looking round Basra, with the aid of the Consul and the ladies in his house, who throughout were most kind and hospitable. They asked us to every meal and regretted that they could not put us up entirely owing to being already full. They took us to the chief mosque of Basra, a brick building with a minaret ornamented with some pretty blue tiles, but, on the whole, a squalid and sorry structure which in India one would hardly turn aside to look at. More interesting were the bazars of Basra, with their numerous and novel types of people, the Arabs of course predominating. I think I mentioned in a previous entry that Basra lies two to three miles away from the main stream of the Shatt-el-Arab, up a side creek. This creek is of course the main stream of traffic, and boats are going up and down in crowds all day, except when the tide falls so low as to make progress impossible. There are no local manufactures of note to be had in Basra. The shops are full of Manchester goods of a florid and ornate pattern, suited to the local taste. One can get, of course, Persian carpets, but they are not of the best sort and the prices are extravagantly high. However, the bazars themselves are sufficiently interesting to a stranger. They differ from similar places in India in that they are covered in, a good arrange-

Its bazars,

and waterways.

Merchandise.



ment in the hot weather, but one which makes the light none of the best, whilst the natural effluvia of the Arab are obtained in a highly concentrated condition.

The date tracffi.

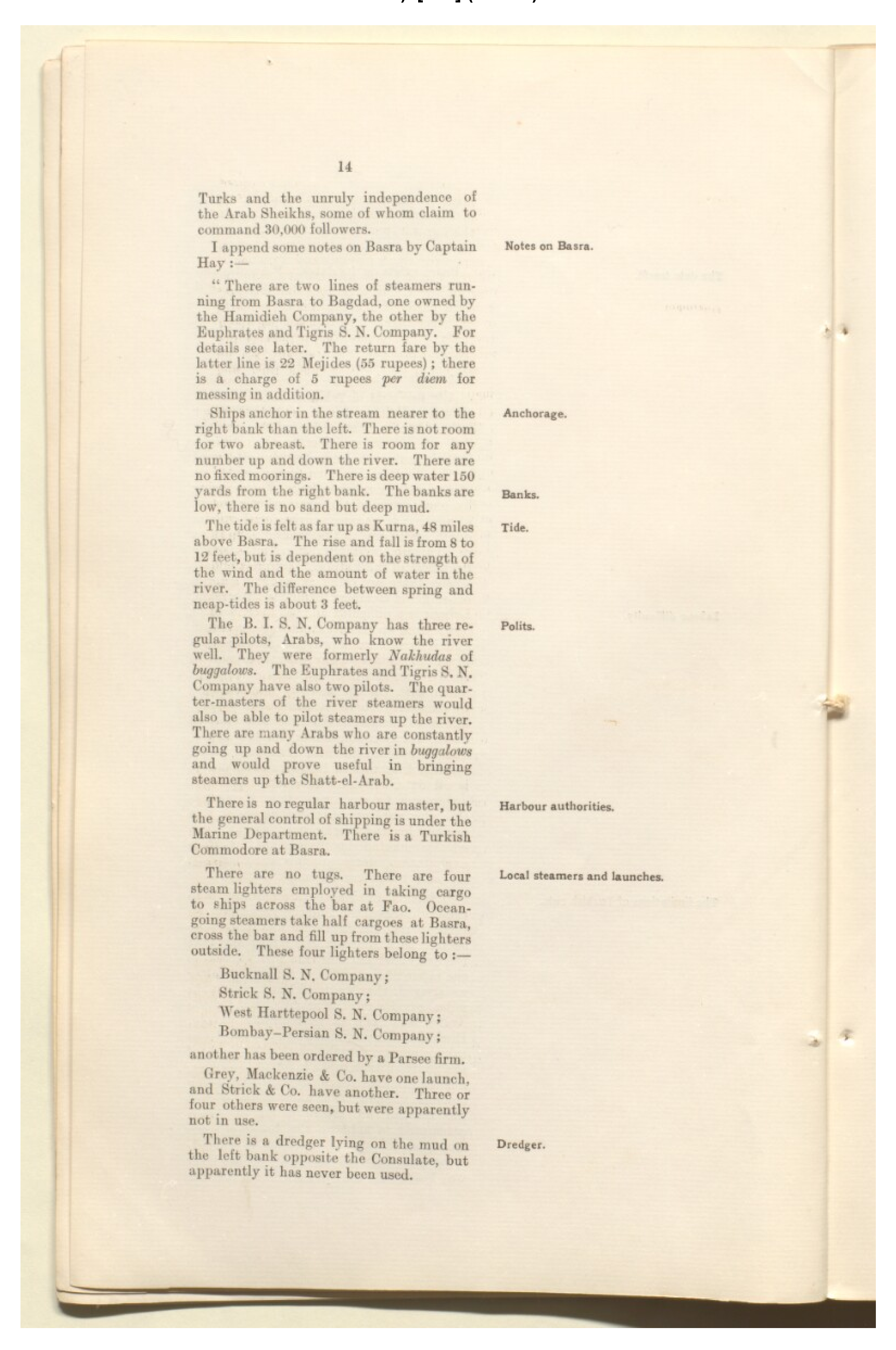
Basra exists on its dates. For miles and miles the banks of the river are fringed with trees, and the quantity of dates exported runs into hundreds of thousands of tons. America, curiously enough, seems to be the biggest customer. It is not a fruit which at any time appealed much to me, and after seeing and hearing something of the methods of packing I shall hanker after it still less. The date season proper lasts roughly from September to the end of December. During that time a British gunboat is invariably stationed in the Shatt-el-Arab, as piracy is by no means entirely extinguished. This policing by one power of the internal waterways of another is at once curious and an eloquent testimony to the general rottenness of Turkish administration in outlying provinces of the Empire. During the date season there are often as many as a dozen ocean-going steamers loading in the stream.

Labour difficulty.

Labour is a difficulty and has to be brought down from up river. High wages prevail, and it is not unknown for unscrupulous firms to entice away, by promises of slightly higher pay, the coolies brought down with much trouble and expense by another. There is considerable emulation to despatch the first ship-load of dates, these commanding higher prices. The skipper of the first boat gets a premium. The talk of Basra business people is all date. I think it would be no exaggeration to say, too, that dates are the one subject of their dreams. But except for the enthusiast, or the man who is making his living out of their exploitation, dates are not very interesting and I will say no more of them.

The limitations of Turkish rule.

If further testimony were required as to the slightness of the hold the Turks have on these parts, the following few items may serve. In a sentence one might say that the extent of Turkish rule was limited to the range of their rifles. A few days after we arrived, the Mudir of Magil, about six miles up the river, was murdered by the Arabs, who appear to be most unruly. During our stay in Basra a battle royal was taking place one night on the left bank of the Shatt-el-Arab. The incident, however, did not appear to cause any surprise, being common enough. The night before we left for Bagdad an armed band of Arabs attempted to hold up the house of some American merchants, situated in an outlying quarter. All the way up the river we heard of the powerlessness of the



Turks and the unruly independence of the Arab Sheikhs, some of whom claim to command 30,000 followers.

Notes on Basra.

I append some notes on Basra by Captain Hay :—

" There are two lines of steamers running from Basra to Bagdad, one owned by the Hamidieh Company, the other by the Euphrates and Tigris S. N. Company. For details see later. The return fare by the latter line is 22 Mejides (55 rupees); there is a charge of 5 rupees *per diem* for messing in addition.

Anchorage.

Ships anchor in the stream nearer to the right bank than the left. There is not room for two abreast. There is room for any number up and down the river. There are no fixed moorings. There is deep water 150 yards from the right bank. The banks are low, there is no sand but deep mud.

Banks.

Tide.

The tide is felt as far up as Kurna, 48 miles above Basra. The rise and fall is from 8 to 12 feet, but is dependent on the strength of the wind and the amount of water in the river. The difference between spring and neap-tides is about 3 feet.

Polits.

The B. I. S. N. Company has three regular pilots, Arabs, who know the river well. They were formerly *Nakhudas* of *buggalows*. The Euphrates and Tigris S. N. Company have also two pilots. The quarter-masters of the river steamers would also be able to pilot steamers up the river. There are many Arabs who are constantly going up and down the river in *buggalows* and would prove useful in bringing steamers up the Shatt-el-Arab.

Harbour authorities.

There is no regular harbour master, but the general control of shipping is under the Marine Department. There is a Turkish Commodore at Basra.

Local steamers and launches.

There are no tugs. There are four steam lighters employed in taking cargo to ships across the bar at Fao. Ocean-going steamers take half cargoes at Basra, cross the bar and fill up from these lighters outside. These four lighters belong to :—

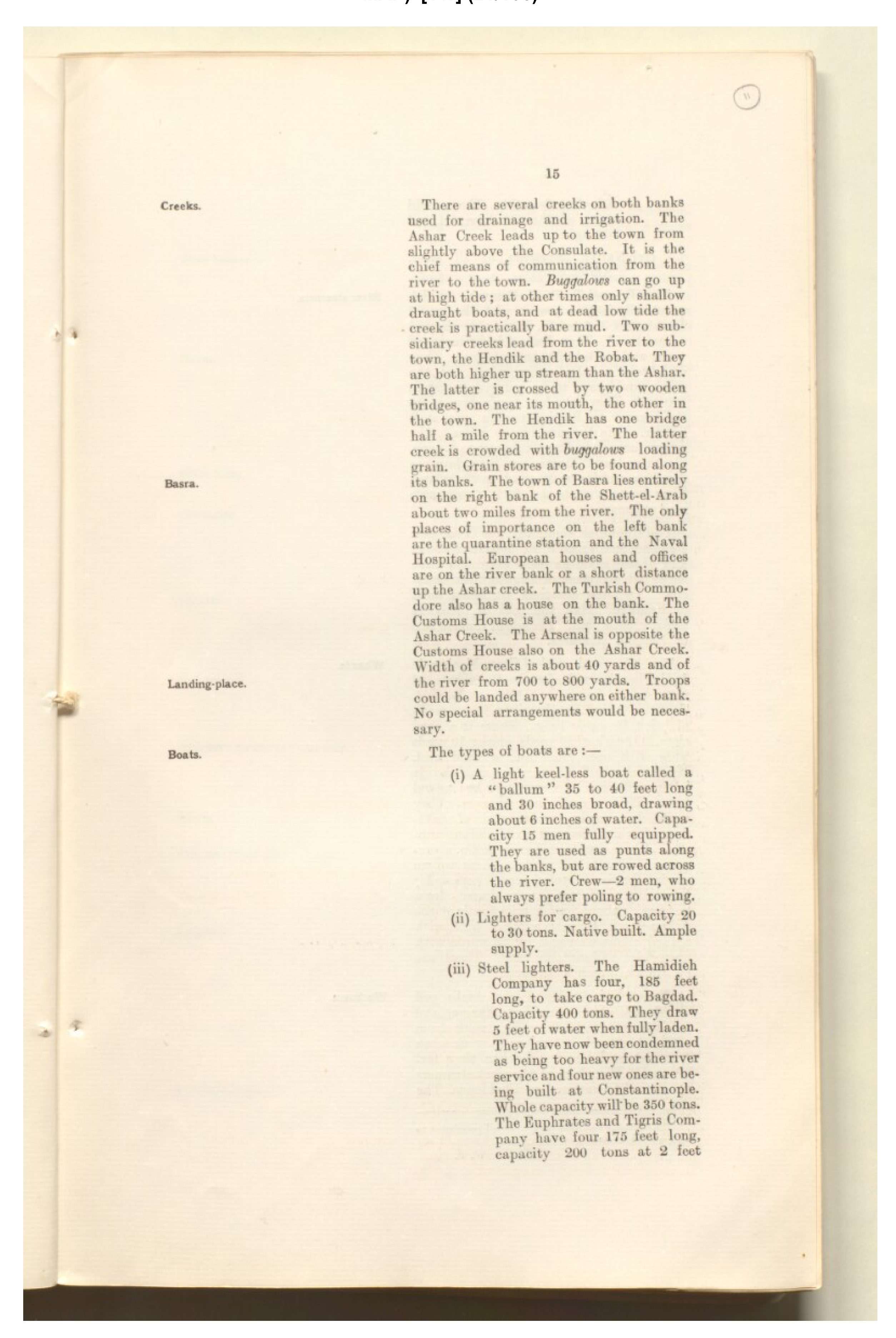
Bucknall S. N. Company;
Strick S. N. Company;
West Harttepool S. N. Company;
Bombay–Persian S. N. Company;

another has been ordered by a Parsee firm.

Grey, Mackenzie & Co. have one launch, and Strick & Co. have another. Three or four others were seen, but were apparently not in use.

Dredger.

There is a dredger lying on the mud on the left bank opposite the Consulate, but apparently it has never been used.



Creeks.

There are several creeks on both banks used for drainage and irrigation. The Ashar Creek leads up to the town from slightly above the Consulate. It is the chief means of communication from the river to the town. *Buggalows* can go up at high tide; at other times only shallow draught boats, and at dead low tide the creek is practically bare mud. Two subsidiary creeks lead from the river to the town, the Hendik and the Robat. They are both higher up stream than the Ashar. The latter is crossed by two wooden bridges, one near its mouth, the other in the town. The Hendik has one bridge half a mile from the river. The latter creek is crowded with *buggalows* loading grain. Grain stores are to be found along its banks.

Basra.

The town of Basra lies entirely on the right bank of the Shett-el-Arab about two miles from the river. The only places of importance on the left bank are the quarantine station and the Naval Hospital. European houses and offices are on the river bank or a short distance up the Ashar creek. The Turkish Commodore also has a house on the bank. The Customs House is at the mouth of the Ashar Creek. The Arsenal is opposite the Customs House also on the Ashar Creek. Width of creeks is about 40 yards and of the river from 700 to 800 yards.

Landing-place.

Troops could be landed anywhere on either bank. No special arrangements would be necessary.

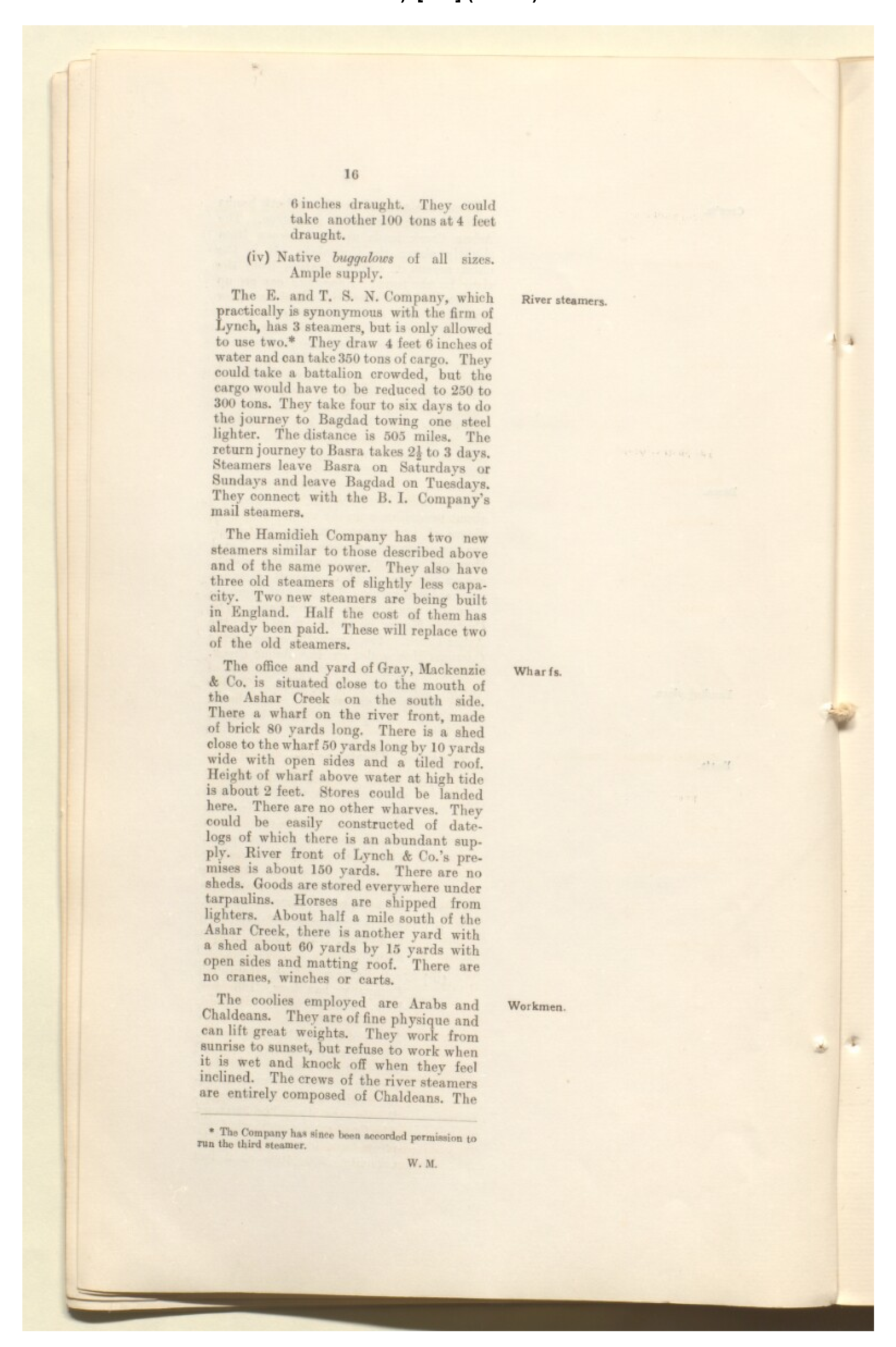
Boats.

The types of boats are:—

(i) A light keel-less boat called a "ballum" 35 to 40 feet long and 30 inches broad, drawing about 6 inches of water. Capacity 15 men fully equipped. They are used as punts along the banks, but are rowed across the river. Crew—2 men, who always prefer poling to rowing.

(ii) Lighters for cargo. Capacity 20 to 30 tons. Native built. Ample supply.

(iii) Steel lighters. The Hamidieh Company has four, 185 feet long, to take cargo to Bagdad. Capacity 400 tons. They draw 5 feet of water when fully laden. They have now been condemned as being too heavy for the river service and four new ones are being built at Constantinople. Whole capacity will be 350 tons. The Euphrates and Tigris Company have four 175 feet long, capacity 200 tons at 2 feet



6 inches draught. They could take another 100 tons at 4 feet draught.

(iv) Native *buggalows* of all sizes. Ample supply.

River steamers.

The E. and T. S. N. Company, which practically is synonymous with the firm of Lynch, has 3 steamers, but is only allowed to use two.* They draw 4 feet 6 inches of water and can take 350 tons of cargo. They could take a battalion crowded, but the cargo would have to be reduced to 250 to 300 tons. They take four to six days to do the journey to Bagdad towing one steel lighter. The distance is 505 miles. The return journey to Basra takes 2½ to 3 days. Steamers leave Basra on Saturdays or Sundays and leave Bagdad on Tuesdays. They connect with the B. I. Company's mail steamers.

The Hamidieh Company has two new steamers similar to those described above and of the same power. They also have three old steamers of slightly less capacity. Two new steamers are being built in England. Half the cost of them has already been paid. These will replace two of the old steamers.

Wharfs.

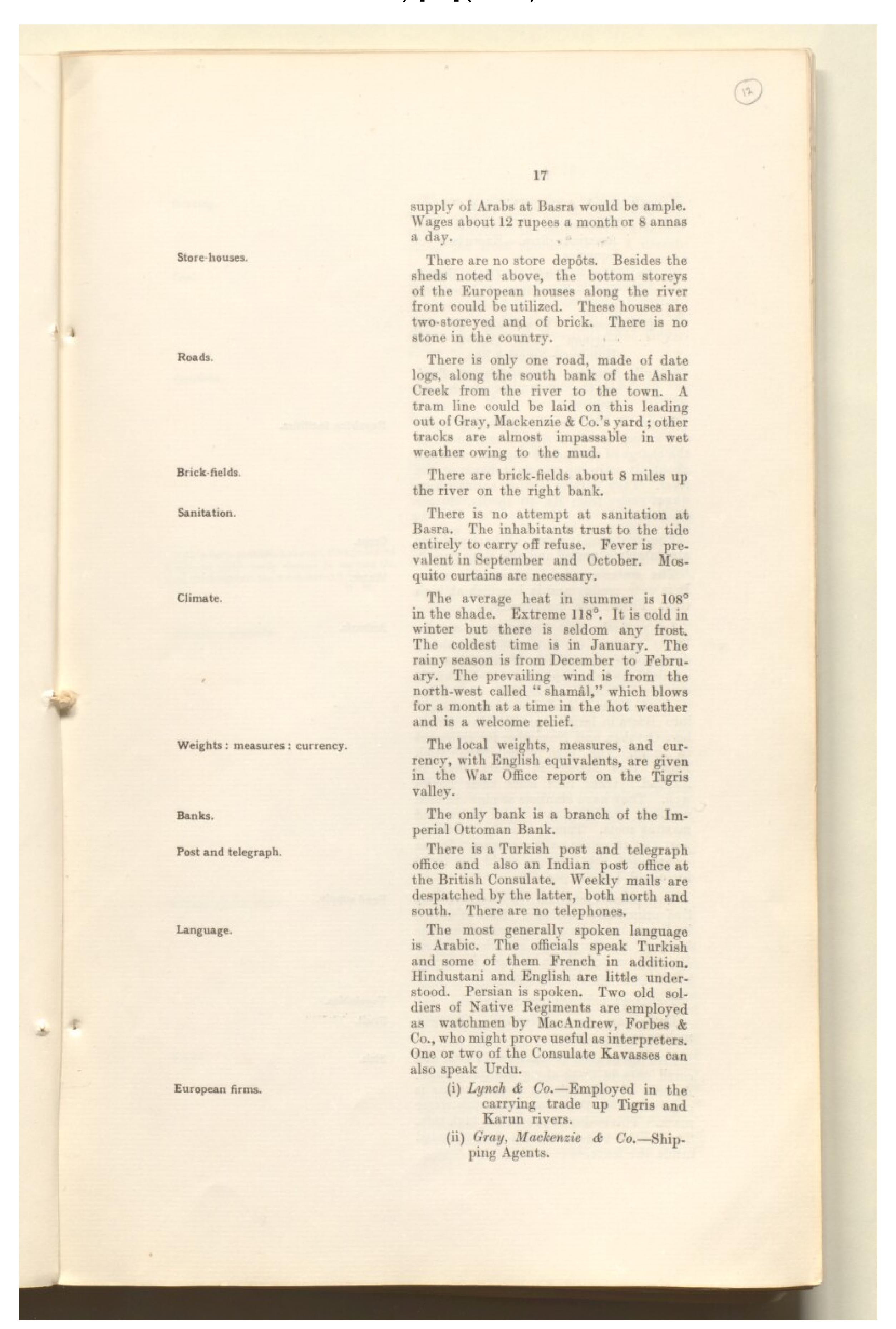
The office and yard of Gray, Mackenzie & Co. is situated close to the mouth of the Ashar Creek on the south side. There a wharf on the river front, made of brick 80 yards long. There is a shed close to the wharf 50 yards long by 10 yards wide with open sides and a tiled roof. Height of wharf above water at high tide is about 2 feet. Stores could be landed here. There are no other wharves. They could be easily constructed of date-logs of which there is an abundant supply. River front of Lynch & Co.'s premises is about 150 yards. There are no sheds. Goods are stored everywhere under tarpaulins. Horses are shipped from lighters. About half a mile south of the Ashar Creek, there is another yard with a shed about 60 yards by 15 yards with open sides and matting roof. There are no cranes, winches or carts.

Workmen.

The coolies employed are Arabs and Chaldeans. They are of fine physique and can lift great weights. They work from sunrise to sunset, but refuse to work when it is wet and knock off when they feel inclined. The crews of the river steamers are entirely composed of Chaldeans. The

* The Company has since been accorded permission to run the third steamer.

W. M.



supply of Arabs at Basra would be ample. Wages about 12 rupees a month or 8 annas a day.

Store-houses. There are no store depôts. Besides the sheds noted above, the bottom storeys of the European houses along the river front could be utilized. These houses are two-storeyed and of brick. There is no stone in the country.

Roads. There is only one road, made of date logs, along the south bank of the Ashar Creek from the river to the town. A tram line could be laid on this leading out of Gray, Mackenzie & Co.'s yard; other tracks are almost impassable in wet weather owing to the mud.

Brick-fields. There are brick-fields about 8 miles up the river on the right bank.

Sanitation. There is no attempt at sanitation at Basra. The inhabitants trust to the tide entirely to carry off refuse. Fever is prevalent in September and October. Mosquito curtains are necessary.

Climate. The average heat in summer is 108° in the shade. Extreme 118°. It is cold in winter but there is seldom any frost. The coldest time is in January. The rainy season is from December to February. The prevailing wind is from the north-west called "shamâl," which blows for a month at a time in the hot weather and is a welcome relief.

Weights : measures : currency. The local weights, measures, and currency, with English equivalents, are given in the War Office report on the Tigris valley.

Banks. The only bank is a branch of the Imperial Ottoman Bank.

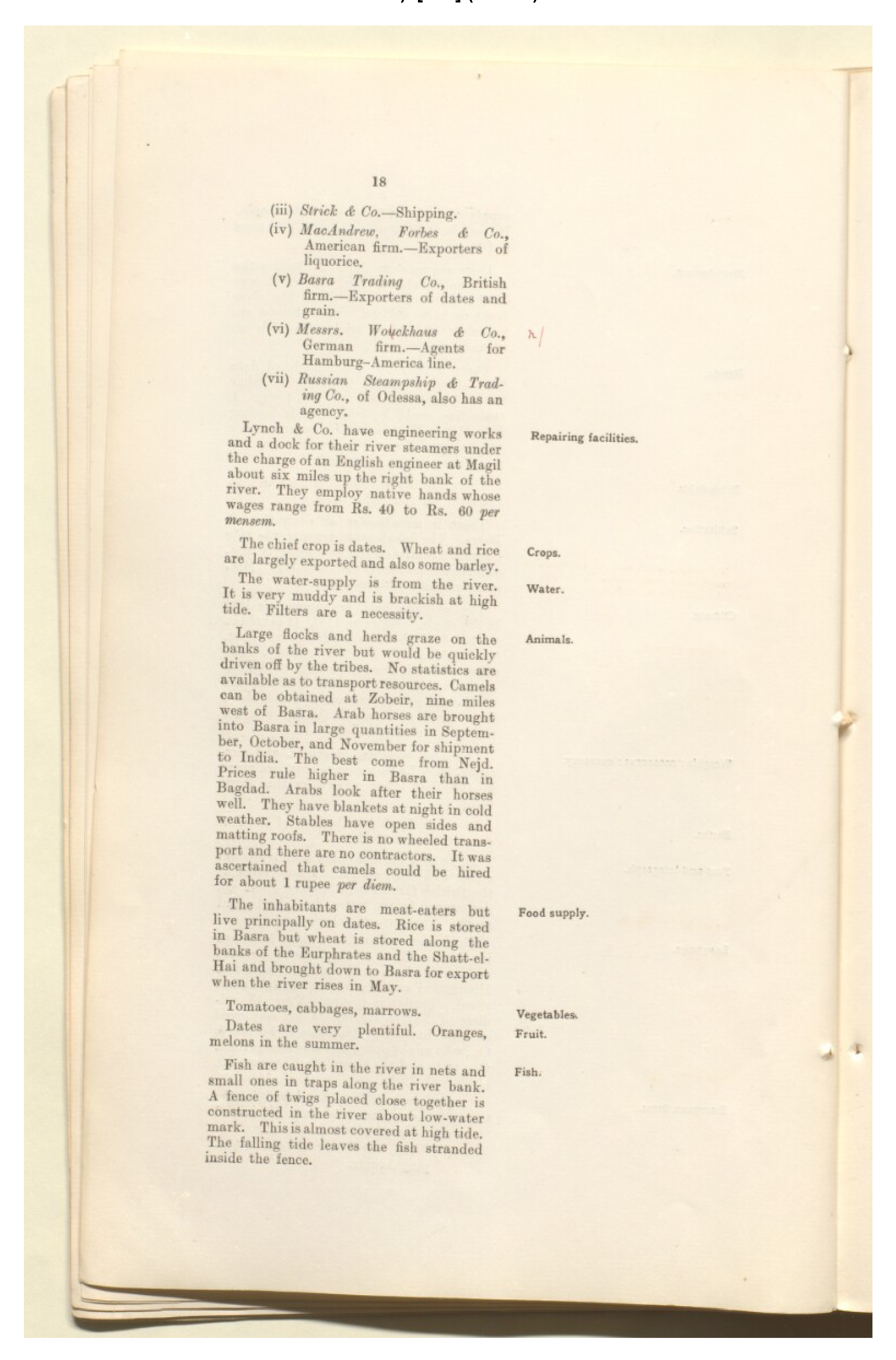
Post and telegraph. There is a Turkish post and telegraph office and also an Indian post office at the British Consulate. Weekly mails are despatched by the latter, both north and south. There are no telephones.

Language. The most generally spoken language is Arabic. The officials speak Turkish and some of them French in addition. Hindustani and English are little understood. Persian is spoken. Two old soldiers of Native Regiments are employed as watchmen by MacAndrew, Forbes & Co., who might prove useful as interpreters. One or two of the Consulate Kavasses can also speak Urdu.

European firms.

(i) *Lynch & Co.*—Employed in the carrying trade up Tigris and Karun rivers.

(ii) *Gray, Mackenzie & Co.*—Shipping Agents.



(iii) *Strick & Co.*—Shipping.

(iv) *MacAndrew, Forbes & Co.*, American firm.—Exporters of liquorice.

(v) *Basra Trading Co.*, British firm.—Exporters of dates and grain.

(vi) *Messrs. Wouckhaus & Co.*, German firm.—Agents for Hamburg-America line.

(vii) *Russian Steampship & Trading Co.*, of Odessa, also has an agency.

Repairing facilities.

Lynch & Co. have engineering works and a dock for their river steamers under the charge of an English engineer at Magil about six miles up the right bank of the river. They employ native hands whose wages range from Rs. 40 to Rs. 60 *per mensem.*

Crops.

The chief crop is dates. Wheat and rice are largely exported and also some barley.

Water.

The water-supply is from the river. It is very muddy and is brackish at high tide. Filters are a necessity.

Animals.

Large flocks and herds graze on the banks of the river but would be quickly driven off by the tribes. No statistics are available as to transport resources. Camels can be obtained at Zobeir, nine miles west of Basra. Arab horses are brought into Basra in large quantities in September, October, and November for shipment to India. The best come from Nejd. Prices rule higher in Basra than in Bagdad. Arabs look after their horses well. They have blankets at night in cold weather. Stables have open sides and matting roofs. There is no wheeled transport and there are no contractors. It was ascertained that camels could be hired for about 1 rupee *per diem.*

Food supply.

The inhabitants are meat-eaters but live principally on dates. Rice is stored in Basra but wheat is stored along the banks of the Eurphrates and the Shatt-el-Hai and brought down to Basra for export when the river rises in May.

Vegetables.

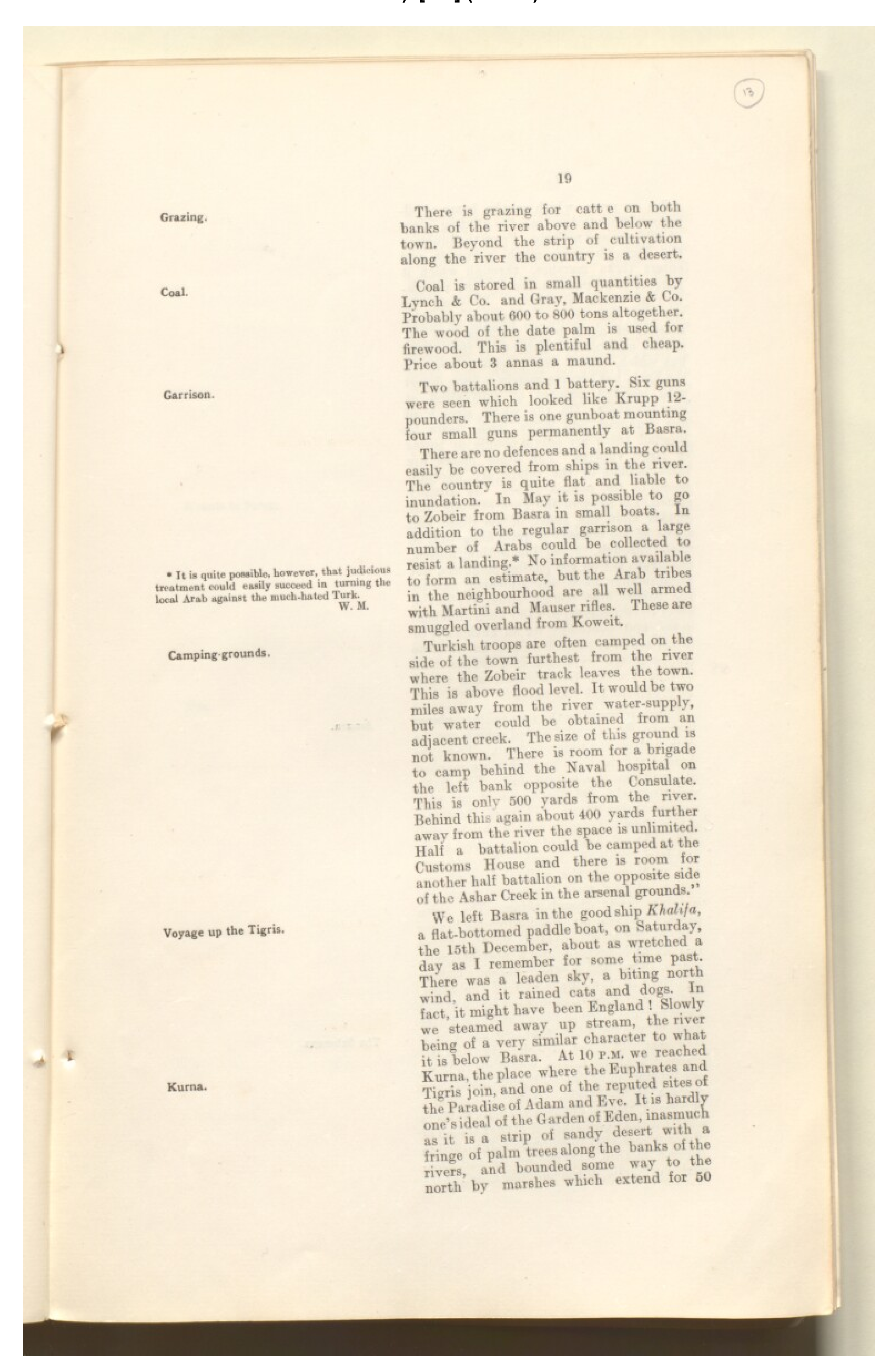
Tomatoes, cabbages, marrows.

Fruit.

Dates are very plentiful. Oranges, melons in the summer.

Fish.

Fish are caught in the river in nets and small ones in traps along the river bank. A fence of twigs placed close together is constructed in the river about low-water mark. This is almost covered at high tide. The falling tide leaves the fish stranded inside the fence.



Grazing.

There is grazing for cattle on both banks of the river above and below the town. Beyond the strip of cultivation along the river the country is a desert.

Coal.

Coal is stored in small quantities by Lynch & Co. and Gray, Mackenzie & Co. Probably about 600 to 800 tons altogether. The wood of the date palm is used for firewood. This is plentiful and cheap. Price about 3 annas a maund.

Garrison.

Two battalions and 1 battery. Six guns were seen which looked like Krupp 12-pounders. There is one gunboat mounting four small guns permanently at Basra.

There are no defences and a landing could easily be covered from ships in the river. The country is quite flat and liable to inundation. In May it is possible to go to Zobeir from Basra in small boats. In addition to the regular garrison a large number of Arabs could be collected to resist a landing.* No information available to form an estimate, but the Arab tribes in the neighbourhood are all well armed with Martini and Mauser rifles. These are smuggled overland from Koweit.

* It is quite possible, however, that judicious treatment could easily succeed in turning the local Arab against the much-hated Turk.
W. M.

Camping-grounds.

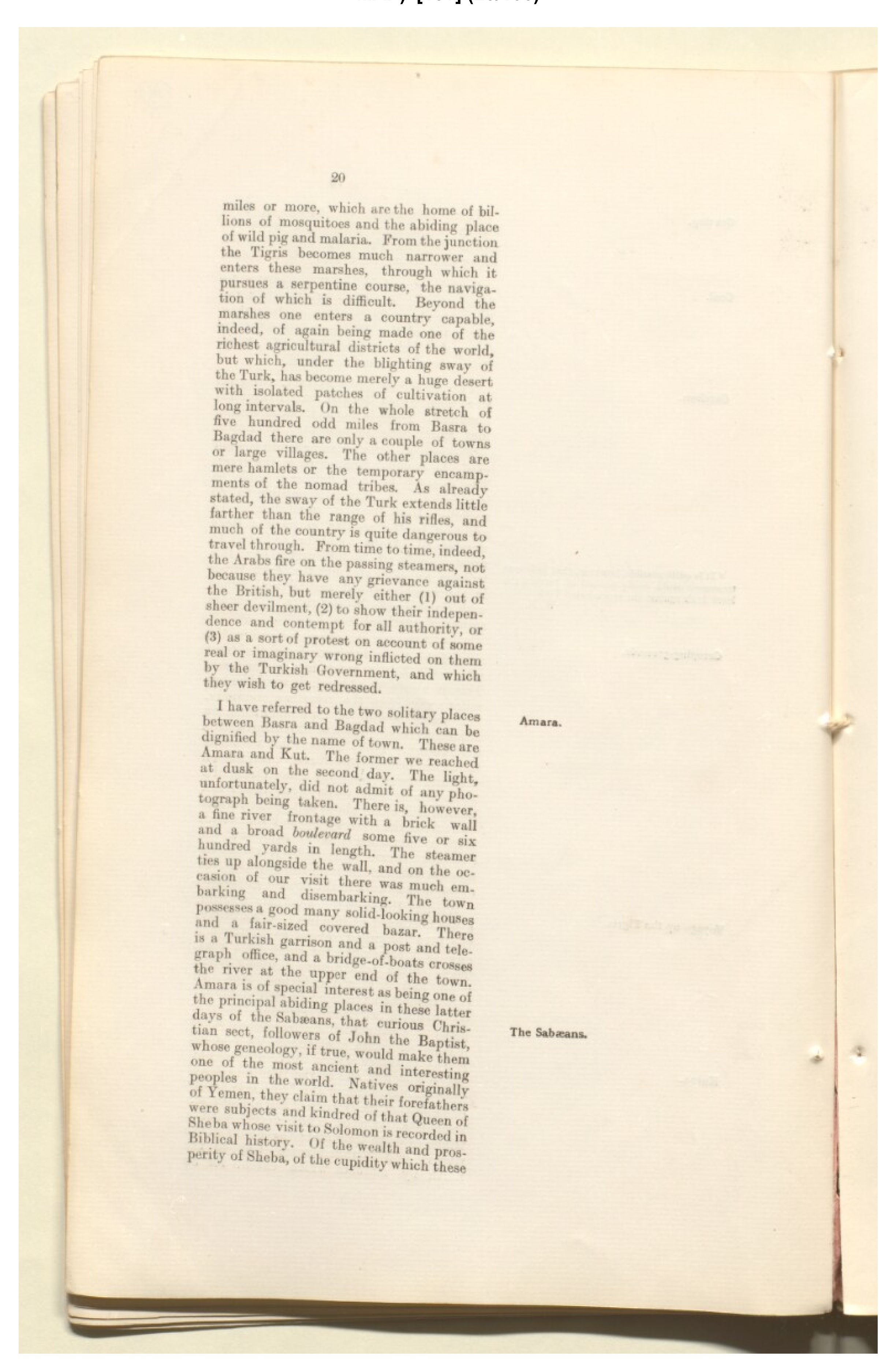
Turkish troops are often camped on the side of the town furthest from the river where the Zobeir track leaves the town. This is above flood level. It would be two miles away from the river water-supply, but water could be obtained from an adjacent creek. The size of this ground is not known. There is room for a brigade to camp behind the Naval hospital on the left bank opposite the Consulate. This is only 500 yards from the river. Behind this again about 400 yards further away from the river the space is unlimited. Half a battalion could be camped at the Customs House and there is room for another half battalion on the opposite side of the Ashar Creek in the arsenal grounds."

Voyage up the Tigris.

We left Basra in the good ship *Khalifa*, a flat-bottomed paddle boat, on Saturday, the 15th December, about as wretched a day as I remember for some time past. There was a leaden sky, a biting north wind, and it rained cats and dogs. In fact, it might have been England! Slowly we steamed away up stream, the river being of a very similar character to what it is below Basra. At 10 P.M. we reached

Kurna.

Kurna, the place where the Euphrates and Tigris join, and one of the reputed sites of the Paradise of Adam and Eve. It is hardly one's ideal of the Garden of Eden, inasmuch as it is a strip of sandy desert with a fringe of palm trees along the banks of the rivers, and bounded some way to the north by marshes which extend for 50



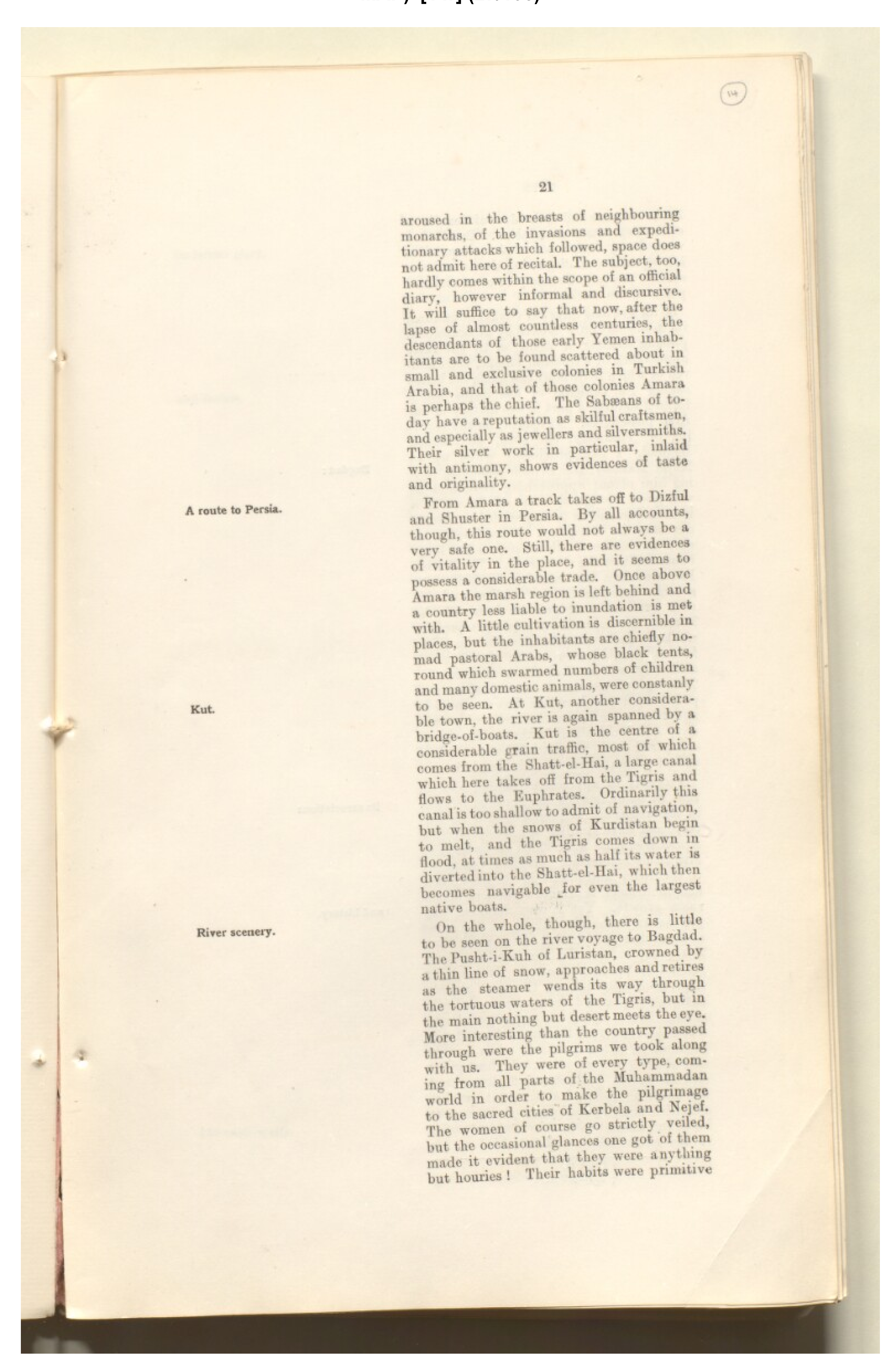
miles or more, which are the home of billions of mosquitoes and the abiding place of wild pig and malaria. From the junction the Tigris becomes much narrower and enters these marshes, through which it pursues a serpentine course, the navigation of which is difficult. Beyond the marshes one enters a country capable, indeed, of again being made one of the richest agricultural districts of the world, but which, under the blighting sway of the Turk, has become merely a huge desert with isolated patches of cultivation at long intervals. On the whole stretch of five hundred odd miles from Basra to Bagdad there are only a couple of towns or large villages. The other places are mere hamlets or the temporary encampments of the nomad tribes. As already stated, the sway of the Turk extends little farther than the range of his rifles, and much of the country is quite dangerous to travel through. From time to time, indeed, the Arabs fire on the passing steamers, not because they have any grievance against the British, but merely either (1) out of sheer devilment, (2) to show their independence and contempt for all authority, or (3) as a sort of protest on account of some real or imaginary wrong inflicted on them by the Turkish Government, and which they wish to get redressed.

Amara.

I have referred to the two solitary places between Basra and Bagdad which can be dignified by the name of town. These are Amara and Kut. The former we reached at dusk on the second day. The light, unfortunately, did not admit of any photograph being taken. There is, however, a fine river frontage with a brick wall and a broad *boulevard* some five or six hundred yards in length. The steamer ties up alongside the wall, and on the occasion of our visit there was much embarking and disembarking. The town possesses a good many solid-looking houses and a fair-sized covered bazar. There is a Turkish garrison and a post and telegraph office, and a bridge-of-boats crosses the river at the upper end of the town.

The Sabæans.

Amara is of special interest as being one of the principal abiding places in these latter days of the Sabæans, that curious Christian sect, followers of John the Baptist, whose geneology, if true, would make them one of the most ancient and interesting peoples in the world. Natives originally of Yemen, they claim that their forefathers were subjects and kindred of that Queen of Sheba whose visit to Solomon is recorded in Biblical history. Of the wealth and prosperity of Sheba, of the cupidity which these



aroused in the breasts of neighbouring monarchs, of the invasions and expeditionary attacks which followed, space does not admit here of recital. The subject, too, hardly comes within the scope of an official diary, however informal and discursive. It will suffice to say that now, after the lapse of almost countless centuries, the descendants of those early Yemen inhabitants are to be found scattered about in small and exclusive colonies in Turkish Arabia, and that of those colonies Amara is perhaps the chief. The Sabæans of to-day have a reputation as skilful craftsmen, and especially as jewellers and silversmiths. Their silver work in particular, inlaid with antimony, shows evidences of taste and originality.

A route to Persia.

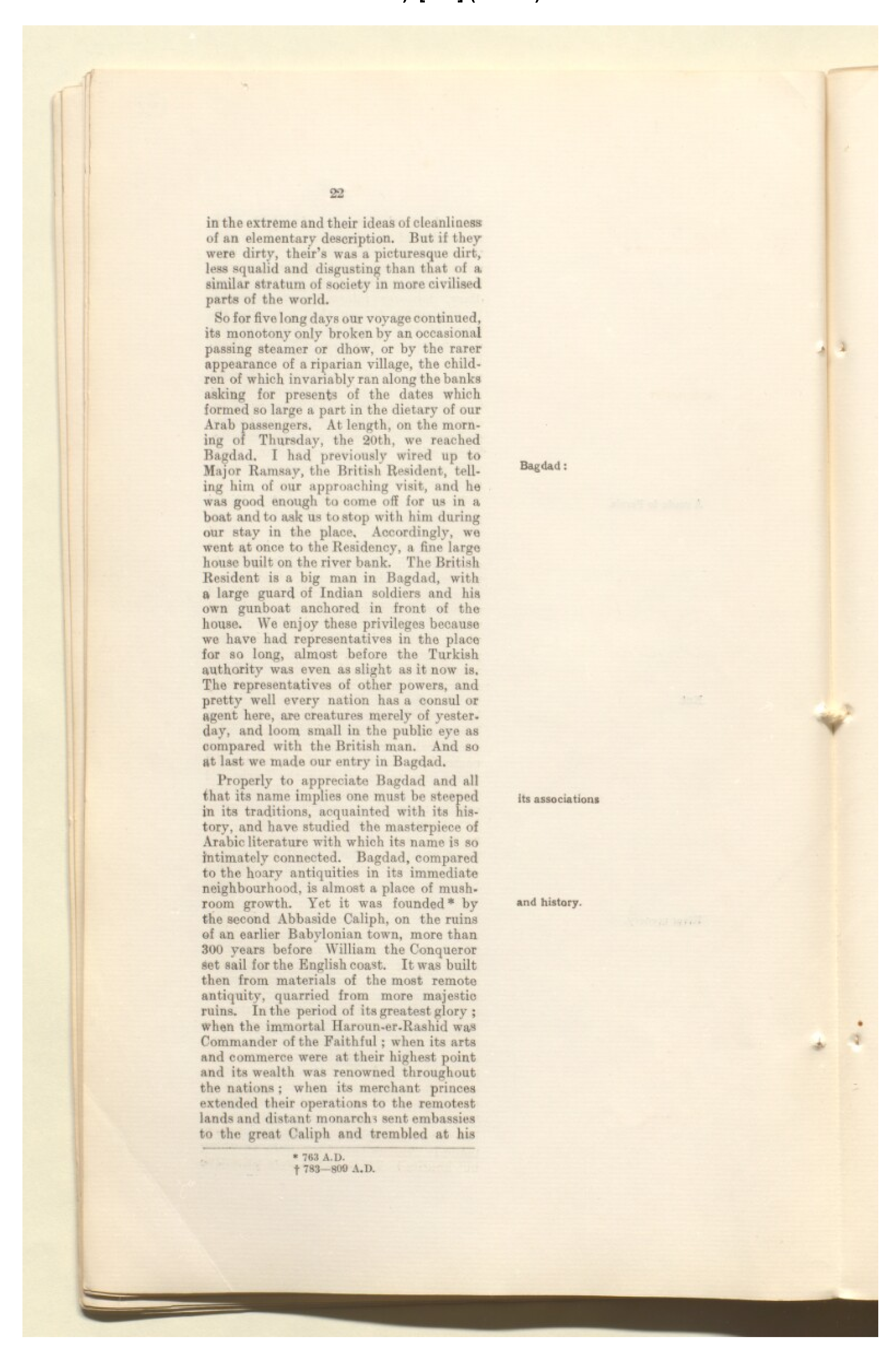
From Amara a track takes off to Dizful and Shuster in Persia. By all accounts, though, this route would not always be a very safe one. Still, there are evidences of vitality in the place, and it seems to possess a considerable trade. Once above Amara the marsh region is left behind and a country less liable to inundation is met with. A little cultivation is discernible in places, but the inhabitants are chiefly nomad pastoral Arabs, whose black tents, round which swarmed numbers of children and many domestic animals, were constanly to be seen.

Kut.

At Kut, another considerable town, the river is again spanned by a bridge-of-boats. Kut is the centre of a considerable grain traffic, most of which comes from the Shatt-el-Hai, a large canal which here takes off from the Tigris and flows to the Euphrates. Ordinarily this canal is too shallow to admit of navigation, but when the snows of Kurdistan begin to melt, and the Tigris comes down in flood, at times as much as half its water is diverted into the Shatt-el-Hai, which then becomes navigable for even the largest native boats.

River scenery.

On the whole, though, there is little to be seen on the river voyage to Bagdad. The Pusht-i-Kuh of Luristan, crowned by a thin line of snow, approaches and retires as the steamer wends its way through the tortuous waters of the Tigris, but in the main nothing but desert meets the eye. More interesting than the country passed through were the pilgrims we took along with us. They were of every type, coming from all parts of the Muhammadan world in order to make the pilgrimage to the sacred cities of Kerbela and Nejef. The women of course go strictly veiled, but the occasional glances one got of them made it evident that they were anything but houries! Their habits were primitive



in the extreme and their ideas of cleanliness of an elementary description. But if they were dirty, their's was a picturesque dirt, less squalid and disgusting than that of a similar stratum of society in more civilised parts of the world.

So for five long days our voyage continued, its monotony only broken by an occasional passing steamer or dhow, or by the rarer appearance of a riparian village, the children of which invariably ran along the banks asking for presents of the dates which formed so large a part in the dietary of our Arab passengers. At length, on the morning of Thursday, the 20th, we reached Bagdad. I had previously wired up to Major Ramsay, the British Resident, telling him of our approaching visit, and he was good enough to come off for us in a boat and to ask us to stop with him during our stay in the place. Accordingly, we went at once to the Residency, a fine large house built on the river bank. The British Resident is a big man in Bagdad, with a large guard of Indian soldiers and his own gunboat anchored in front of the house. We enjoy these privileges because we have had representatives in the place for so long, almost before the Turkish authority was even as slight as it now is. The representatives of other powers, and pretty well every nation has a consul or agent here, are creatures merely of yesterday, and loom small in the public eye as compared with the British man. And so at last we made our entry in Bagdad.

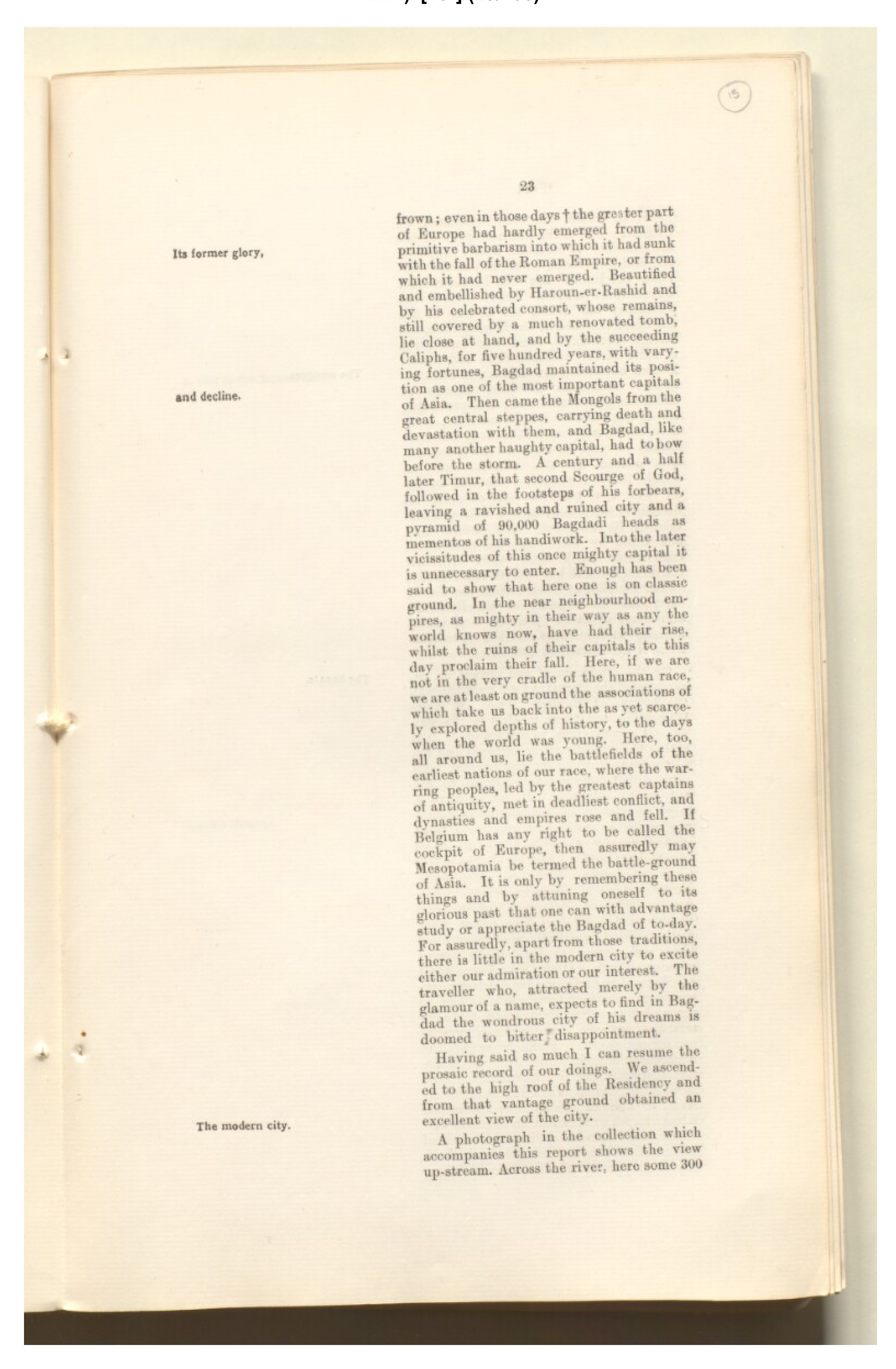
Bagdad:

Properly to appreciate Bagdad and all that its name implies one must be steeped in its traditions, acquainted with its history, and have studied the masterpiece of Arabic literature with which its name is so intimately connected. Bagdad, compared to the hoary antiquities in its immediate neighbourhood, is almost a place of mushroom growth. Yet it was founded* by the second Abbaside Caliph, on the ruins of an earlier Babylonian town, more than 300 years before William the Conqueror set sail for the English coast. It was built then from materials of the most remote antiquity, quarried from more majestic ruins. In the period of its greatest glory; when the immortal Haroun-er-Rashid was Commander of the Faithful; when its arts and commerce were at their highest point and its wealth was renowned throughout the nations; when its merchant princes extended their operations to the remotest lands and distant monarchs sent embassies to the great Caliph and trembled at his

its associations

and history.

* 763 A.D.
† 783—809 A.D.



Its former glory,

frown; even in those days † the grester part of Europe had hardly emerged from the primitive barbarism into which it had sunk with the fall of the Roman Empire, or from which it had never emerged. Beautified and embellished by Haroun-er-Rashid and by his celebrated consort, whose remains, still covered by a much renovated tomb, lie close at hand, and by the succeeding Caliphs, for five hundred years, with varying fortunes, Bagdad maintained its position as one of the most important capitals of Asia.

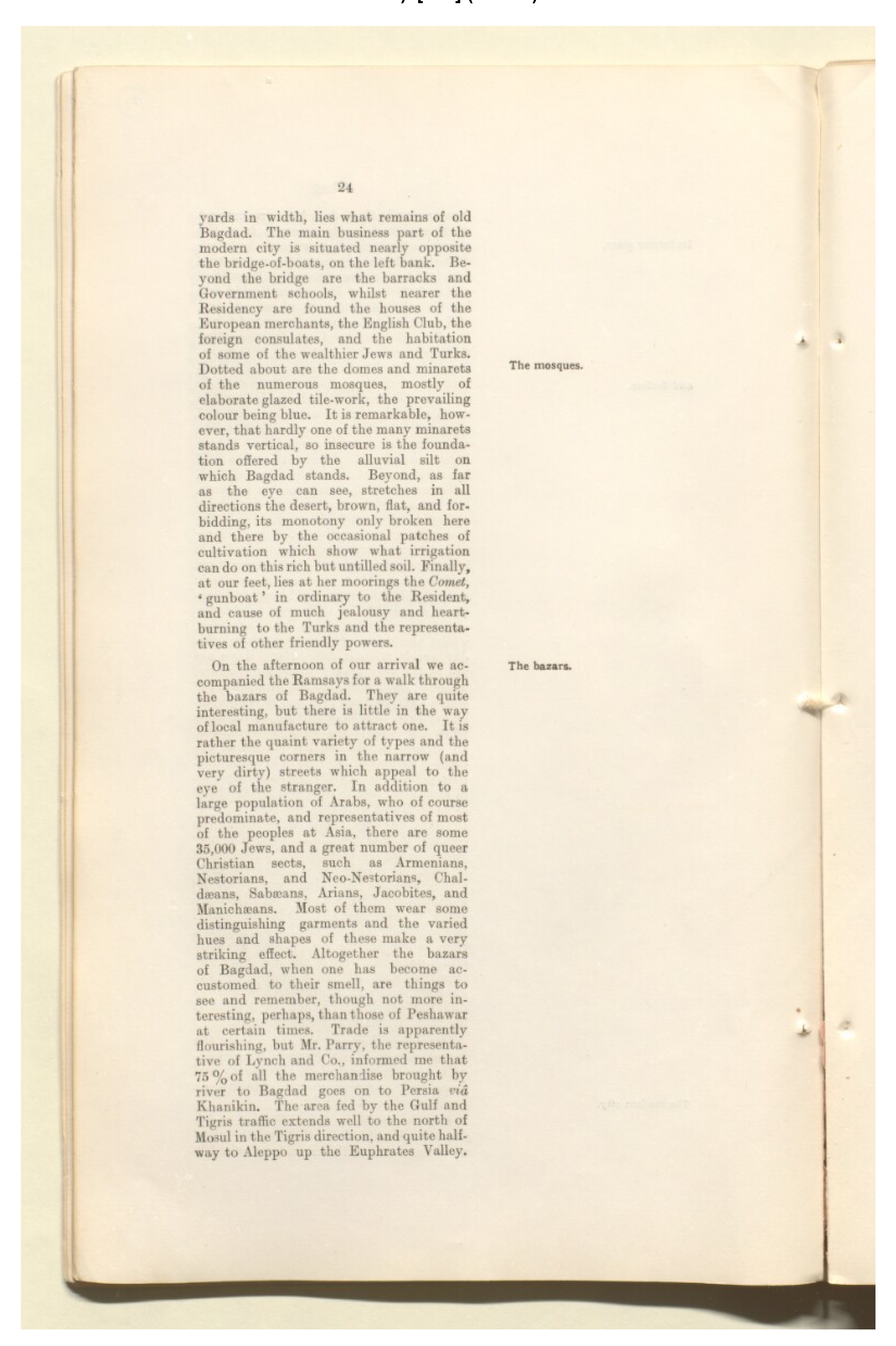
and decline.

Then came the Mongols from the great central steppes, carrying death and devastation with them, and Bagdad, like many another haughty capital, had to bow before the storm. A century and a half later Timur, that second Scourge of God, followed in the footsteps of his forbears, leaving a ravished and ruined city and a pyramid of 90,000 Bagdadi heads as mementos of his handiwork. Into the later vicissitudes of this once mighty capital it is unnecessary to enter. Enough has been said to show that here one is on classic ground. In the near neighbourhood empires, as mighty in their way as any the world knows now, have had their rise, whilst the ruins of their capitals to this day proclaim their fall. Here, if we are not in the very cradle of the human race, we are at least on ground the associations of which take us back into the as yet scarcely explored depths of history, to the days when the world was young. Here, too, all around us, lie the battlefields of the earliest nations of our race, where the warring peoples, led by the greatest captains of antiquity, met in deadliest conflict, and dynasties and empires rose and fell. If Belgium has any right to be called the cockpit of Europe, then assuredly may Mesopotamia be termed the battle-ground of Asia. It is only by remembering these things and by attuning oneself to its glorious past that one can with advantage study or appreciate the Bagdad of to-day. For assuredly, apart from those traditions, there is little in the modern city to excite either our admiration or our interest. The traveller who, attracted merely by the glamour of a name, expects to find in Bagdad the wondrous city of his dreams is doomed to bitter; disappointment.

Having said so much I can resume the prosaic record of our doings. We ascended to the high roof of the Residency and from that vantage ground obtained an excellent view of the city.

The modern city.

A photograph in the collection which accompanies this report shows the view up-stream. Across the river, here some 300

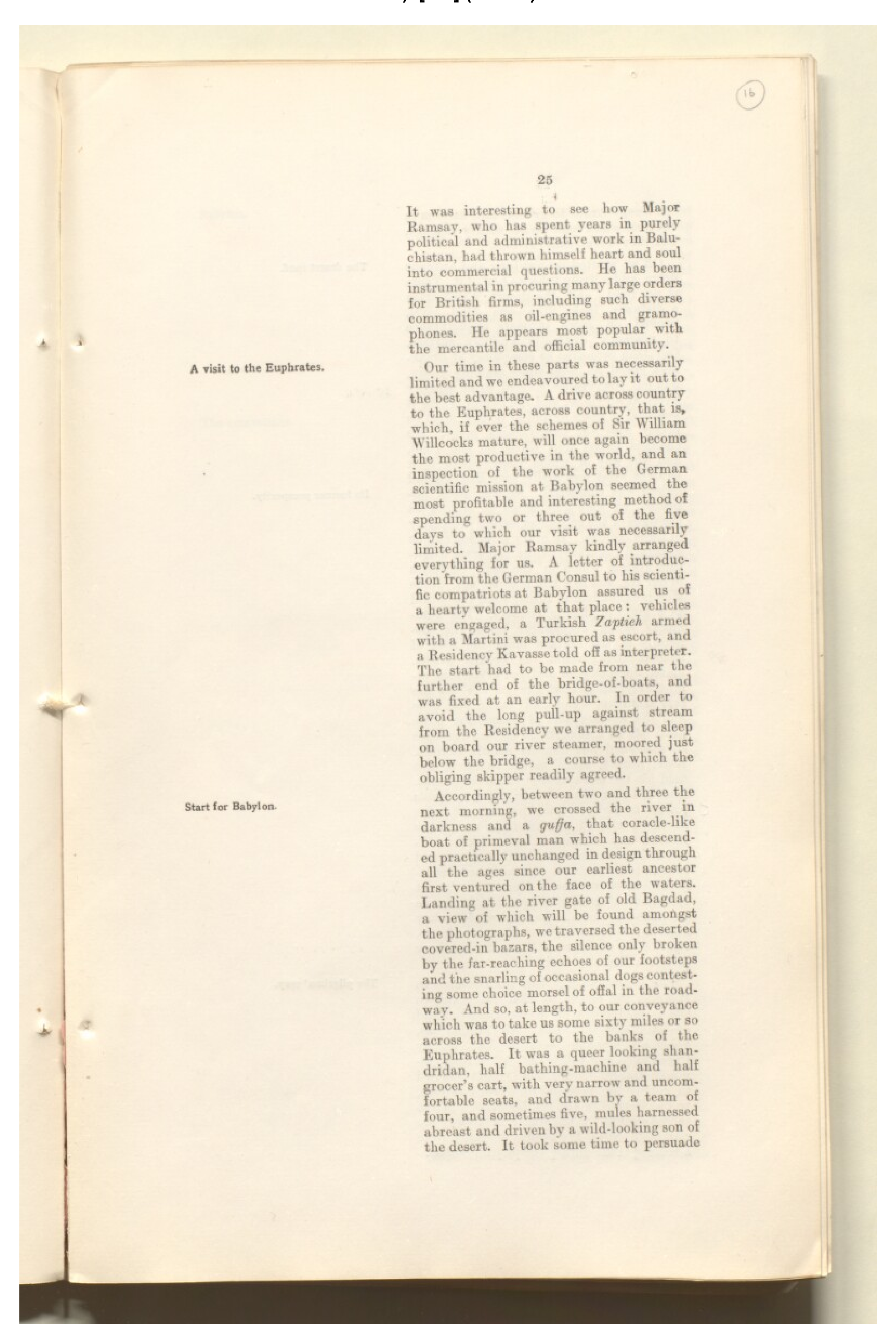


yards in width, lies what remains of old Bagdad. The main business part of the modern city is situated nearly opposite the bridge-of-boats, on the left bank. Beyond the bridge are the barracks and Government schools, whilst nearer the Residency are found the houses of the European merchants, the English Club, the foreign consulates, and the habitation of some of the wealthier Jews and Turks. Dotted about are the domes and minarets of the numerous mosques, mostly of elaborate glazed tile-work, the prevailing colour being blue. It is remarkable, however, that hardly one of the many minarets stands vertical, so insecure is the foundation offered by the alluvial silt on which Bagdad stands. Beyond, as far as the eye can see, stretches in all directions the desert, brown, flat, and forbidding, its monotony only broken here and there by the occasional patches of cultivation which show what irrigation can do on this rich but untilled soil. Finally, at our feet, lies at her moorings the *Comet*, 'gunboat' in ordinary to the Resident, and cause of much jealousy and heart-burning to the Turks and the representatives of other friendly powers.

The mosques.

On the afternoon of our arrival we accompanied the Ramsays for a walk through the bazars of Bagdad. They are quite interesting, but there is little in the way of local manufacture to attract one. It is rather the quaint variety of types and the picturesque corners in the narrow (and very dirty) streets which appeal to the eye of the stranger. In addition to a large population of Arabs, who of course predominate, and representatives of most of the peoples at Asia, there are some 35,000 Jews, and a great number of queer Christian sects, such as Armenians, Nestorians, and Neo-Nestorians, Chaldæans, Sabæans, Arians, Jacobites, and Manichæans. Most of them wear some distinguishing garments and the varied hues and shapes of these make a very striking effect. Altogether the bazars of Bagdad, when one has become accustomed to their smell, are things to see and remember, though not more interesting, perhaps, than those of Peshawar at certain times. Trade is apparently flourishing, but Mr. Parry, the representative of Lynch and Co., informed me that 75 % of all the merchandise brought by river to Bagdad goes on to Persia *viâ* Khanikin. The area fed by the Gulf and Tigris traffic extends well to the north of Mosul in the Tigris direction, and quite halfway to Aleppo up the Euphrates Valley.

The bazars.



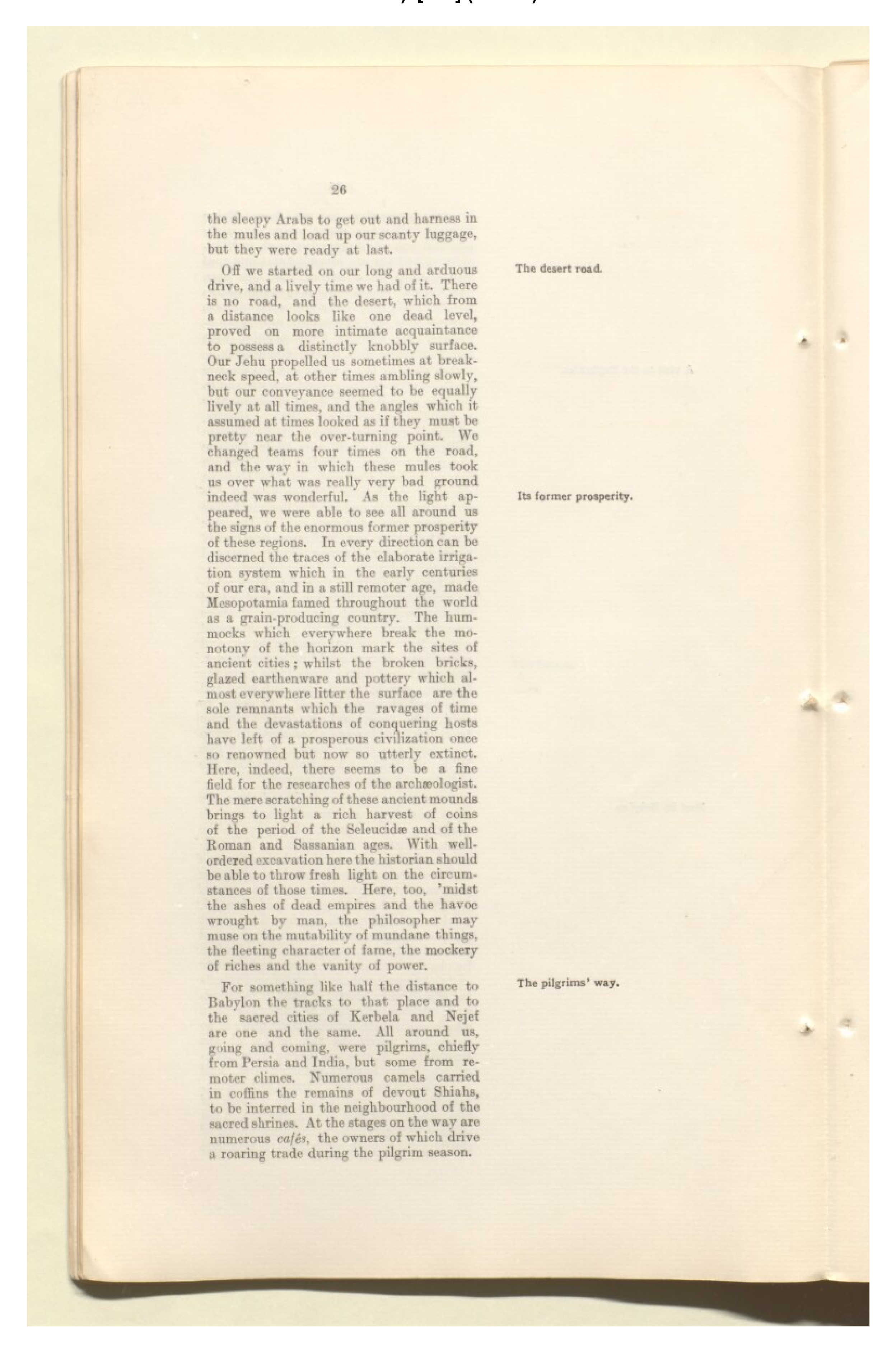
It was interesting to see how Major Ramsay, who has spent years in purely political and administrative work in Baluchistan, had thrown himself heart and soul into commercial questions. He has been instrumental in procuring many large orders for British firms, including such diverse commodities as oil-engines and gramophones. He appears most popular with the mercantile and official community.

A visit to the Euphrates.

Our time in these parts was necessarily limited and we endeavoured to lay it out to the best advantage. A drive across country to the Euphrates, across country, that is, which, if ever the schemes of Sir William Willcocks mature, will once again become the most productive in the world, and an inspection of the work of the German scientific mission at Babylon seemed the most profitable and interesting method of spending two or three out of the five days to which our visit was necessarily limited. Major Ramsay kindly arranged everything for us. A letter of introduction from the German Consul to his scientific compatriots at Babylon assured us of a hearty welcome at that place: vehicles were engaged, a Turkish *Zaptieh* armed with a Martini was procured as escort, and a Residency Kavasse told off as interpreter. The start had to be made from near the further end of the bridge-of-boats, and was fixed at an early hour. In order to avoid the long pull-up against stream from the Residency we arranged to sleep on board our river steamer, moored just below the bridge, a course to which the obliging skipper readily agreed.

Start for Babylon.

Accordingly, between two and three the next morning, we crossed the river in darkness and a *guffa*, that coracle-like boat of primeval man which has descended practically unchanged in design through all the ages since our earliest ancestor first ventured on the face of the waters. Landing at the river gate of old Bagdad, a view of which will be found amongst the photographs, we traversed the deserted covered-in bazars, the silence only broken by the far-reaching echoes of our footsteps and the snarling of occasional dogs contesting some choice morsel of offal in the roadway. And so, at length, to our conveyance which was to take us some sixty miles or so across the desert to the banks of the Euphrates. It was a queer looking shandridan, half bathing-machine and half grocer's cart, with very narrow and uncomfortable seats, and drawn by a team of four, and sometimes five, mules harnessed abreast and driven by a wild-looking son of the desert. It took some time to persuade



the sleepy Arabs to get out and harness in the mules and load up our scanty luggage, but they were ready at last.

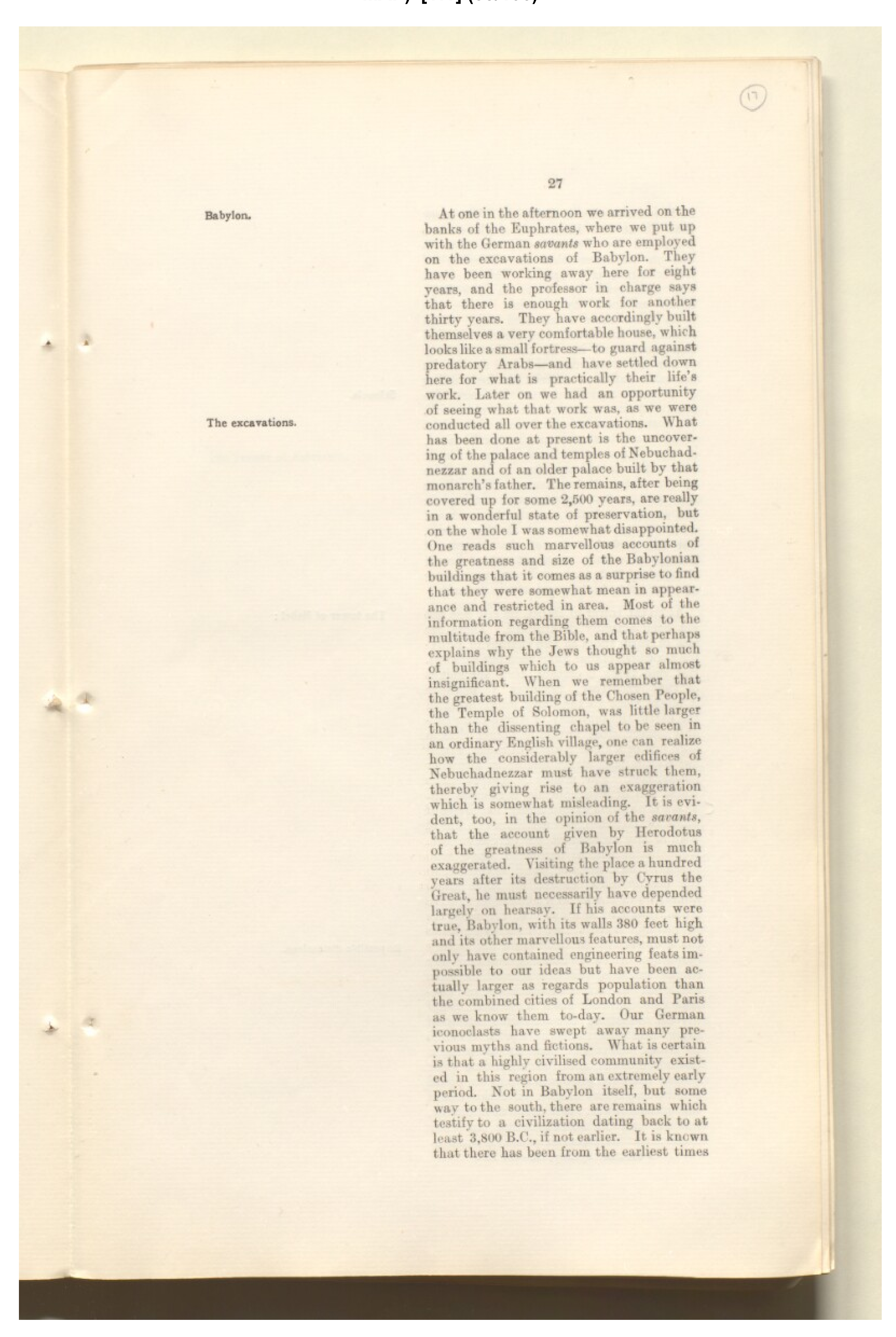
The desert road.

Off we started on our long and arduous drive, and a lively time we had of it. There is no road, and the desert, which from a distance looks like one dead level, proved on more intimate acquaintance to possess a distinctly knobbly surface. Our Jehu propelled us sometimes at break-neck speed, at other times ambling slowly, but our conveyance seemed to be equally lively at all times, and the angles which it assumed at times looked as if they must be pretty near the over-turning point. We changed teams four times on the road, and the way in which these mules took us over what was really very bad ground indeed was wonderful. As the light appeared, we were able to see all around us the signs of the enormous former prosperity of these regions. In every direction can be discerned the traces of the elaborate irrigation system which in the early centuries of our era, and in a still remoter age, made Mesopotamia famed throughout the world as a grain-producing country. The hummocks which everywhere break the monotony of the horizon mark the sites of ancient cities; whilst the broken bricks, glazed earthenware and pottery which almost everywhere litter the surface are the sole remnants which the ravages of time and the devastations of conquering hosts have left of a prosperous civilization once so renowned but now so utterly extinct. Here, indeed, there seems to be a fine field for the researches of the archæologist. The mere scratching of these ancient mounds brings to light a rich harvest of coins of the period of the Seleucidæ and of the Roman and Sassanian ages. With well-ordered excavation here the historian should be able to throw fresh light on the circumstances of those times. Here, too, 'midst the ashes of dead empires and the havoc wrought by man, the philosopher may muse on the mutability of mundane things, the fleeting character of fame, the mockery of riches and the vanity of power.

Its former prosperity.

The pilgrims' way.

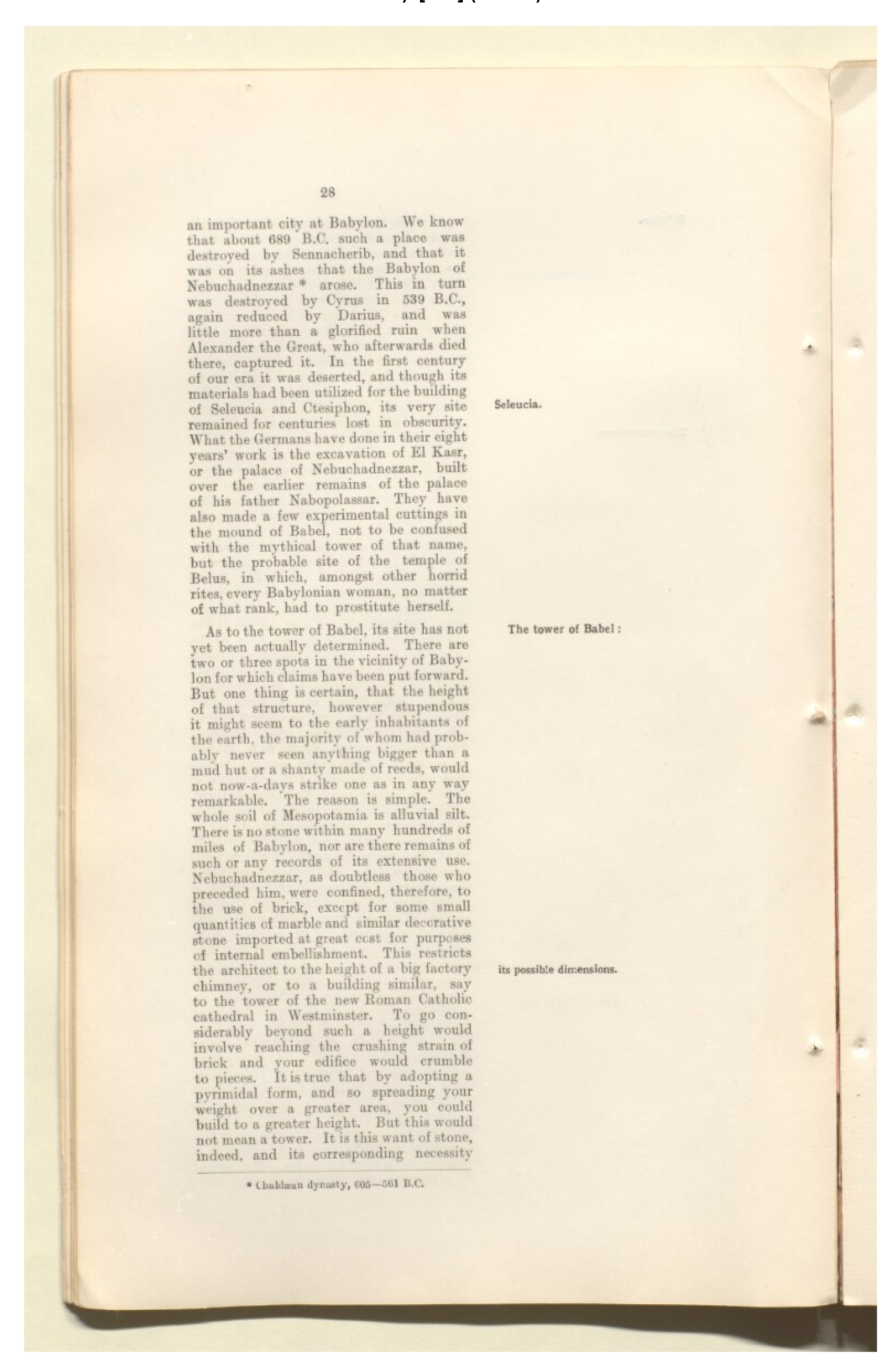
For something like half the distance to Babylon the tracks to that place and to the sacred cities of Kerbela and Nejef are one and the same. All around us, going and coming, were pilgrims, chiefly from Persia and India, but some from remoter climes. Numerous camels carried in coffins the remains of devout Shiahs, to be interred in the neighbourhood of the sacred shrines. At the stages on the way are numerous *cafés*, the owners of which drive a roaring trade during the pilgrim season.



Babylon.

At one in the afternoon we arrived on the banks of the Euphrates, where we put up with the German *savants* who are employed on the excavations of Babylon. They have been working away here for eight years, and the professor in charge says that there is enough work for another thirty years. They have accordingly built themselves a very comfortable house, which looks like a small fortress—to guard against predatory Arabs—and have settled down here for what is practically their life's work. Later on we had an opportunity of seeing what that work was, as we were conducted all over the excavations. What has been done at present is the uncovering of the palace and temples of Nebuchadnezzar and of an older palace built by that monarch's father. The remains, after being covered up for some 2,500 years, are really in a wonderful state of preservation, but on the whole I was somewhat disappointed. One reads such marvellous accounts of the greatness and size of the Babylonian buildings that it comes as a surprise to find that they were somewhat mean in appearance and restricted in area. Most of the information regarding them comes to the multitude from the Bible, and that perhaps explains why the Jews thought so much of buildings which to us appear almost insignificant. When we remember that the greatest building of the Chosen People, the Temple of Solomon, was little larger than the dissenting chapel to be seen in an ordinary English village, one can realize how the considerably larger edifices of Nebuchadnezzar must have struck them, thereby giving rise to an exaggeration which is somewhat misleading. It is evident, too, in the opinion of the *savants*, that the account given by Herodotus of the greatness of Babylon is much exaggerated. Visiting the place a hundred years after its destruction by Cyrus the Great, he must necessarily have depended largely on hearsay. If his accounts were true, Babylon, with its walls 380 feet high and its other marvellous features, must not only have contained engineering feats impossible to our ideas but have been actually larger as regards population than the combined cities of London and Paris as we know them to-day. Our German iconoclasts have swept away many previous myths and fictions. What is certain is that a highly civilised community existed in this region from an extremely early period. Not in Babylon itself, but some way to the south, there are remains which testify to a civilization dating back to at least 3,800 B.C., if not earlier. It is known that there has been from the earliest times

The excavations.



an important city at Babylon. We know that about 689 B.C. such a place was destroyed by Sennacherib, and that it was on its ashes that the Babylon of Nebuchadnezzar * arose. This in turn was destroyed by Cyrus in 539 B.C., again reduced by Darius, and was little more than a glorified ruin when Alexander the Great, who afterwards died there, captured it. In the first century of our era it was deserted, and though its materials had been utilized for the building of Seleucia and Ctesiphon, its very site remained for centuries lost in obscurity. What the Germans have done in their eight years' work is the excavation of El Kasr, or the palace of Nebuchadnezzar, built over the earlier remains of the palace of his father Nabopolassar. They have also made a few experimental cuttings in the mound of Babel, not to be confused with the mythical tower of that name, but the probable site of the temple of Belus, in which, amongst other horrid rites, every Babylonian woman, no matter of what rank, had to prostitute herself.

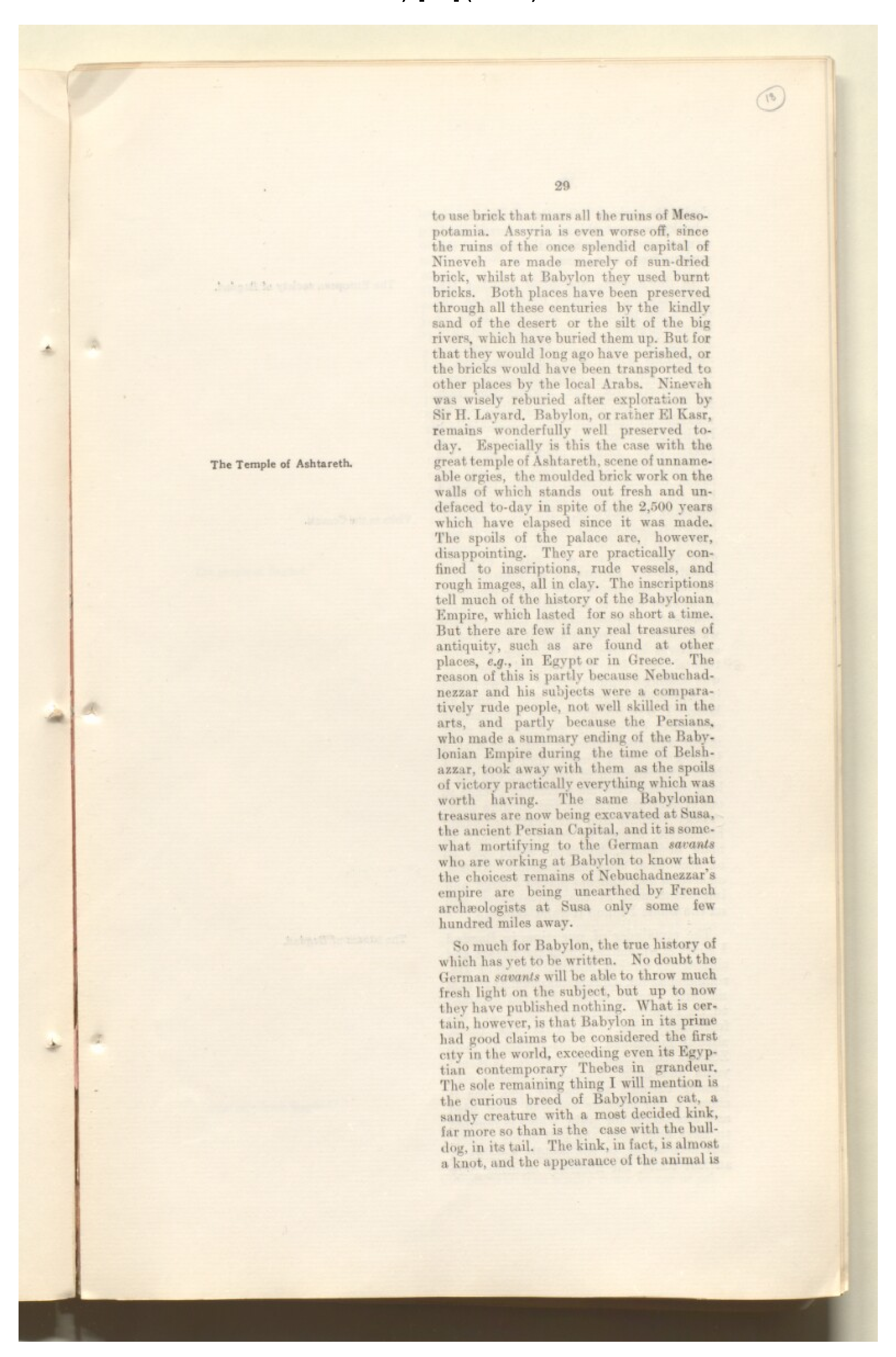
Seleucia.

The tower of Babel:

As to the tower of Babel, its site has not yet been actually determined. There are two or three spots in the vicinity of Babylon for which claims have been put forward. But one thing is certain, that the height of that structure, however stupendous it might seem to the early inhabitants of the earth, the majority of whom had probably never seen anything bigger than a mud hut or a shanty made of reeds, would not now-a-days strike one as in any way remarkable. The reason is simple. The whole soil of Mesopotamia is alluvial silt. There is no stone within many hundreds of miles of Babylon, nor are there remains of such or any records of its extensive use. Nebuchadnezzar, as doubtless those who preceded him, were confined, therefore, to the use of brick, except for some small quantities of marble and similar decorative stone imported at great cost for purposes of internal embellishment. This restricts the architect to the height of a big factory chimney, or to a building similar, say to the tower of the new Roman Catholic cathedral in Westminster. To go considerably beyond such a height would involve reaching the crushing strain of brick and your edifice would crumble to pieces. It is true that by adopting a pyrimidal form, and so spreading your weight over a greater area, you could build to a greater height. But this would not mean a tower. It is this want of stone, indeed, and its corresponding necessity

its possible dimensions.

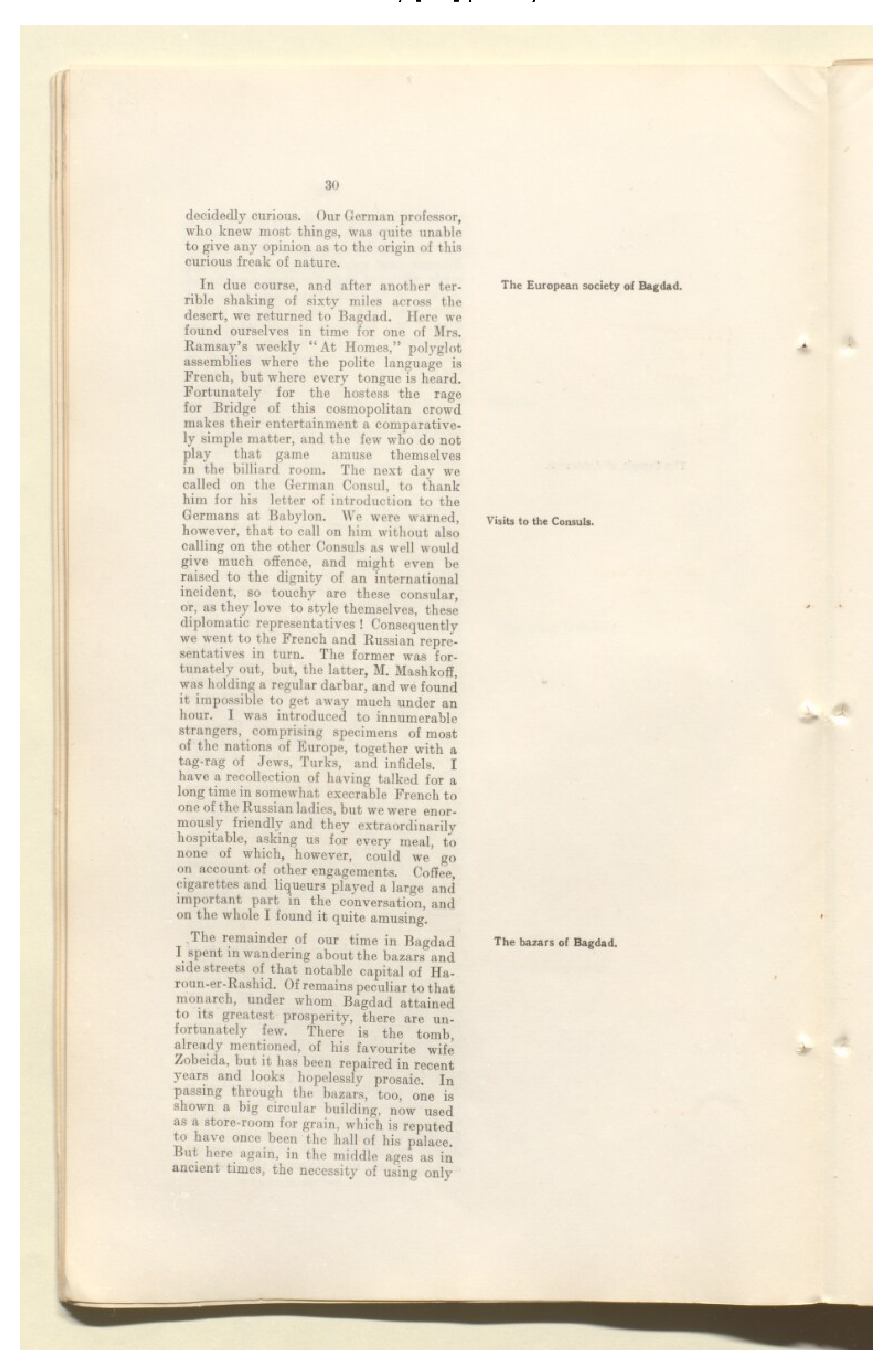
* Chaldæan dynasty, 605—561 B.C.



to use brick that mars all the ruins of Mesopotamia. Assyria is even worse off, since the ruins of the once splendid capital of Nineveh are made merely of sun-dried brick, whilst at Babylon they used burnt bricks. Both places have been preserved through all these centuries by the kindly sand of the desert or the silt of the big rivers, which have buried them up. But for that they would long ago have perished, or the bricks would have been transported to other places by the local Arabs. Nineveh was wisely reburied after exploration by Sir H. Layard. Babylon, or rather El Kasr, remains wonderfully well preserved to-day. Especially is this the case with the great temple of Ashtareth, scene of unnameable orgies, the moulded brick work on the walls of which stands out fresh and undefaced to-day in spite of the 2,500 years which have elapsed since it was made. The spoils of the palace are, however, disappointing. They are practically confined to inscriptions, rude vessels, and rough images, all in clay. The inscriptions tell much of the history of the Babylonian Empire, which lasted for so short a time. But there are few if any real treasures of antiquity, such as are found at other places, *e.g.*, in Egypt or in Greece. The reason of this is partly because Nebuchadnezzar and his subjects were a comparatively rude people, not well skilled in the arts, and partly because the Persians, who made a summary ending of the Babylonian Empire during the time of Belshazzar, took away with them as the spoils of victory practically everything which was worth having. The same Babylonian treasures are now being excavated at Susa, the ancient Persian Capital, and it is somewhat mortifying to the German *savants* who are working at Babylon to know that the choicest remains of Nebuchadnezzar's empire are being unearthed by French archæologists at Susa only some few hundred miles away.

The Temple of Ashtareth.

So much for Babylon, the true history of which has yet to be written. No doubt the German *savants* will be able to throw much fresh light on the subject, but up to now they have published nothing. What is certain, however, is that Babylon in its prime had good claims to be considered the first city in the world, exceeding even its Egyptian contemporary Thebes in grandeur. The sole remaining thing I will mention is the curious breed of Babylonian cat, a sandy creature with a most decided kink, far more so than is the case with the bull-dog, in its tail. The kink, in fact, is almost a knot, and the appearance of the animal is



decidedly curious. Our German professor, who knew most things, was quite unable to give any opinion as to the origin of this curious freak of nature.

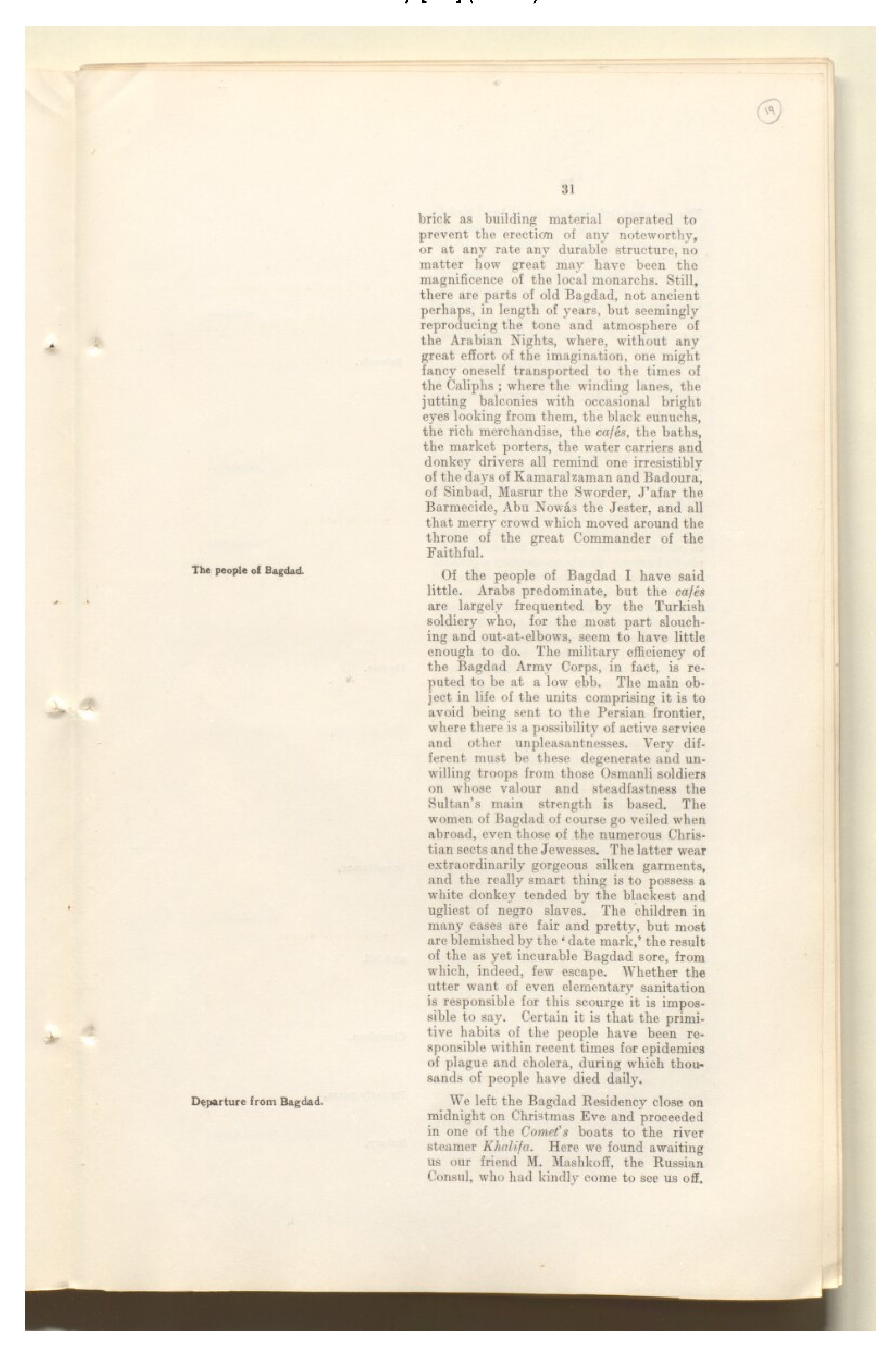
The European society of Bagdad.

In due course, and after another terrible shaking of sixty miles across the desert, we returned to Bagdad. Here we found ourselves in time for one of Mrs. Ramsay's weekly "At Homes," polyglot assemblies where the polite language is French, but where every tongue is heard. Fortunately for the hostess the rage for Bridge of this cosmopolitan crowd makes their entertainment a comparatively simple matter, and the few who do not play that game amuse themselves in the billiard room. The next day we called on the German Consul, to thank him for his letter of introduction to the Germans at Babylon. We were warned, however, that to call on him without also calling on the other Consuls as well would give much offence, and might even be raised to the dignity of an international incident, so touchy are these consular, or, as they love to style themselves, these diplomatic representatives! Consequently we went to the French and Russian representatives in turn. The former was fortunately out, but, the latter, M. Mashkoff, was holding a regular darbar, and we found it impossible to get away much under an hour. I was introduced to innumerable strangers, comprising specimens of most of the nations of Europe, together with a tag-rag of Jews, Turks, and infidels. I have a recollection of having talked for a long time in somewhat execrable French to one of the Russian ladies, but we were enormously friendly and they extraordinarily hospitable, asking us for every meal, to none of which, however, could we go on account of other engagements. Coffee, cigarettes and liqueurs played a large and important part in the conversation, and on the whole I found it quite amusing.

Visits to the Consuls.

The bazars of Bagdad.

The remainder of our time in Bagdad I spent in wandering about the bazars and side streets of that notable capital of Haroun-er-Rashid. Of remains peculiar to that monarch, under whom Bagdad attained to its greatest prosperity, there are unfortunately few. There is the tomb, already mentioned, of his favourite wife Zobeida, but it has been repaired in recent years and looks hopelessly prosaic. In passing through the bazars, too, one is shown a big circular building, now used as a store-room for grain, which is reputed to have once been the hall of his palace. But here again, in the middle ages as in ancient times, the necessity of using only



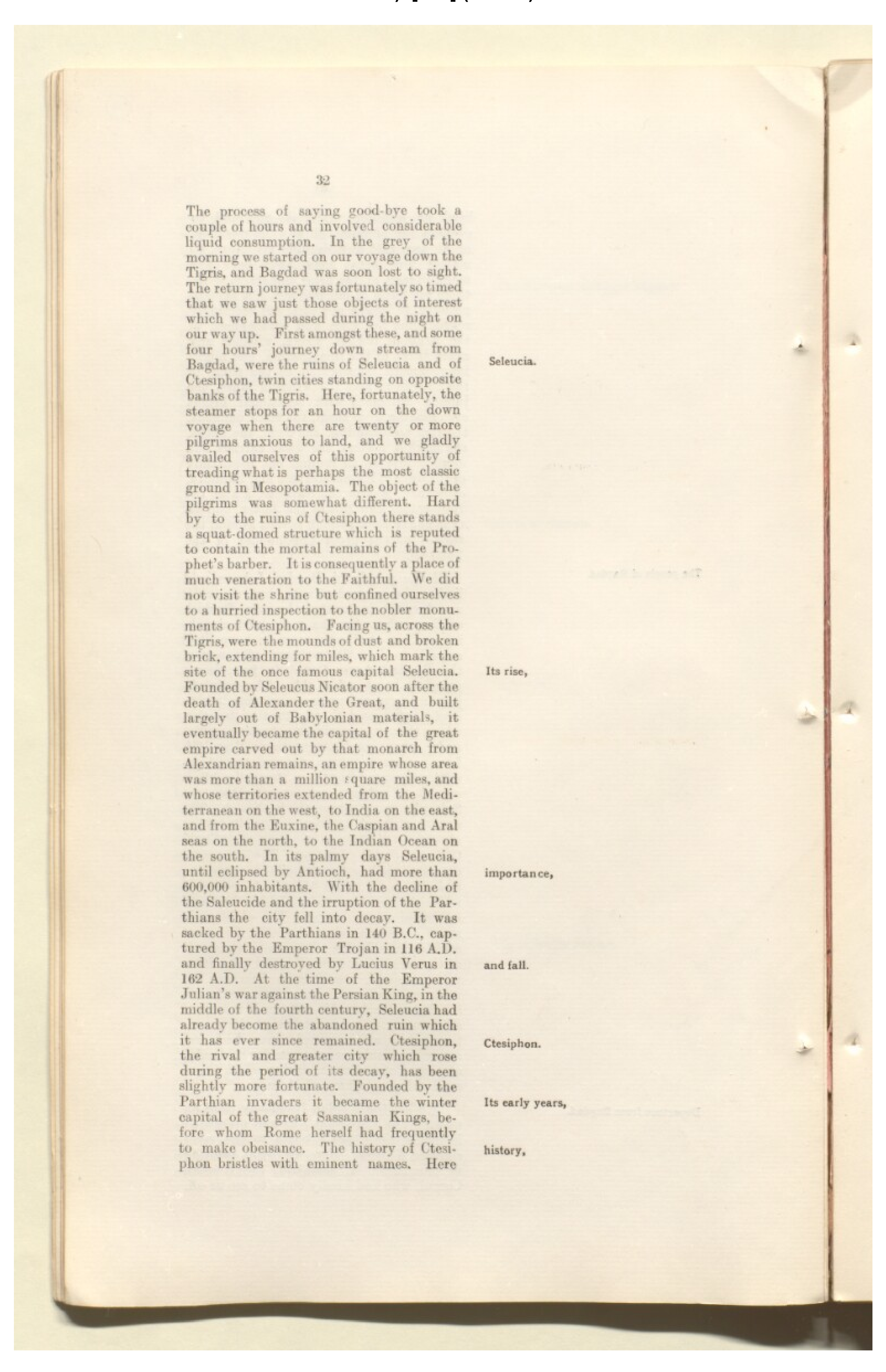
brick as building material operated to prevent the erection of any noteworthy, or at any rate any durable structure, no matter how great may have been the magnificence of the local monarchs. Still, there are parts of old Bagdad, not ancient perhaps, in length of years, but seemingly reproducing the tone and atmosphere of the Arabian Nights, where, without any great effort of the imagination, one might fancy oneself transported to the times of the Caliphs; where the winding lanes, the jutting balconies with occasional bright eyes looking from them, the black eunuchs, the rich merchandise, the *cafés*, the baths, the market porters, the water carriers and donkey drivers all remind one irresistibly of the days of Kamaralzaman and Badoura, of Sinbad, Masrur the Sworder, J'afar the Barmecide, Abu Nowás the Jester, and all that merry crowd which moved around the throne of the great Commander of the Faithful.

The people of Bagdad.

Of the people of Bagdad I have said little. Arabs predominate, but the *cafés* are largely frequented by the Turkish soldiery who, for the most part slouching and out-at-elbows, seem to have little enough to do. The military efficiency of the Bagdad Army Corps, in fact, is reputed to be at a low ebb. The main object in life of the units comprising it is to avoid being sent to the Persian frontier, where there is a possibility of active service and other unpleasantnesses. Very different must be these degenerate and unwilling troops from those Osmanli soldiers on whose valour and steadfastness the Sultan's main strength is based. The women of Bagdad of course go veiled when abroad, even those of the numerous Christian sects and the Jewesses. The latter wear extraordinarily gorgeous silken garments, and the really smart thing is to possess a white donkey tended by the blackest and ugliest of negro slaves. The children in many cases are fair and pretty, but most are blemished by the 'date mark,' the result of the as yet incurable Bagdad sore, from which, indeed, few escape. Whether the utter want of even elementary sanitation is responsible for this scourge it is impossible to say. Certain it is that the primitive habits of the people have been responsible within recent times for epidemics of plague and cholera, during which thousands of people have died daily.

Departure from Bagdad.

We left the Bagdad Residency close on midnight on Christmas Eve and proceeded in one of the *Comet's* boats to the river steamer *Khalifa*. Here we found awaiting us our friend M. Mashkoff, the Russian Consul, who had kindly come to see us off.



The process of saying good-bye took a couple of hours and involved considerable liquid consumption. In the grey of the morning we started on our voyage down the Tigris, and Bagdad was soon lost to sight. The return journey was fortunately so timed that we saw just those objects of interest which we had passed during the night on our way up. First amongst these, and some four hours' journey down stream from Bagdad, were the ruins of Seleucia and of Ctesiphon, twin cities standing on opposite banks of the Tigris. Here, fortunately, the steamer stops for an hour on the down voyage when there are twenty or more pilgrims anxious to land, and we gladly availed ourselves of this opportunity of treading what is perhaps the most classic ground in Mesopotamia. The object of the pilgrims was somewhat different. Hard by to the ruins of Ctesiphon there stands a squat-domed structure which is reputed to contain the mortal remains of the Prophet's barber. It is consequently a place of much veneration to the Faithful. We did not visit the shrine but confined ourselves to a hurried inspection to the nobler monuments of Ctesiphon. Facing us, across the Tigris, were the mounds of dust and broken brick, extending for miles, which mark the site of the once famous capital Seleucia. Founded by Seleucus Nicator soon after the death of Alexander the Great, and built largely out of Babylonian materials, it eventually became the capital of the great empire carved out by that monarch from Alexandrian remains, an empire whose area was more than a million square miles, and whose territories extended from the Mediterranean on the west, to India on the east, and from the Euxine, the Caspian and Aral seas on the north, to the Indian Ocean on the south. In its palmy days Seleucia, until eclipsed by Antioch, had more than 600,000 inhabitants. With the decline of the Saleucide and the irruption of the Parthians the city fell into decay. It was sacked by the Parthians in 140 B.C., captured by the Emperor Trojan in 116 A.D. and finally destroyed by Lucius Verus in 162 A.D. At the time of the Emperor Julian's war against the Persian King, in the middle of the fourth century, Seleucia had already become the abandoned ruin which it has ever since remained. Ctesiphon, the rival and greater city which rose during the period of its decay, has been slightly more fortunate. Founded by the Parthian invaders it became the winter capital of the great Sassanian Kings, before whom Rome herself had frequently to make obeisance. The history of Ctesiphon bristles with eminent names. Here

Seleucia.

Its rise,

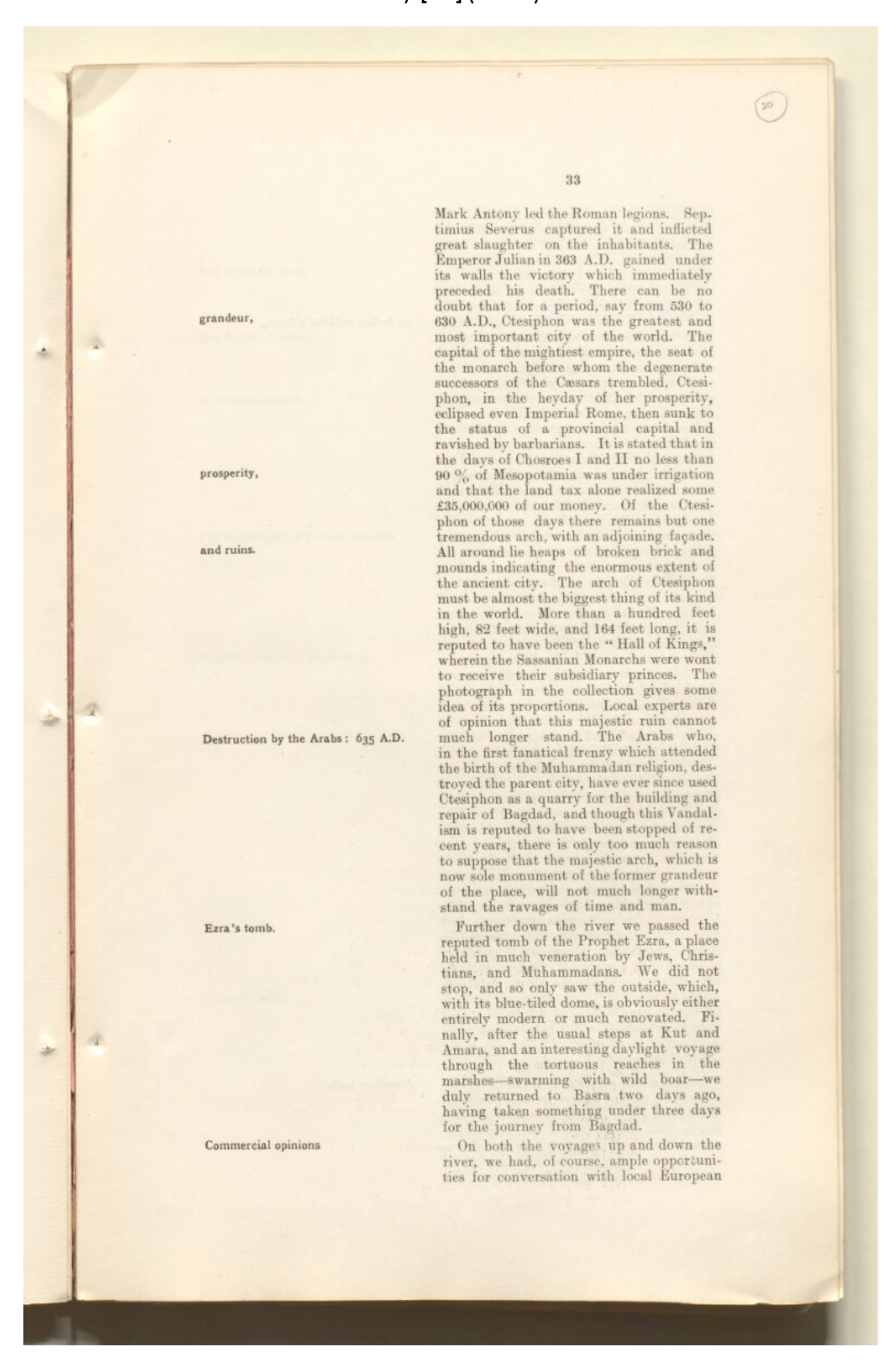
importance,

and fall.

Ctesiphon.

Its early years,

history,



Mark Antony led the Roman legions. Septimius Severus captured it and inflicted great slaughter on the inhabitants. The Emperor Julian in 363 A.D. gained under its walls the victory which immediately preceded his death. There can be no doubt that for a period, say from 530 to 630 A.D., Ctesiphon was the greatest and most important city of the world. The capital of the mightiest empire, the seat of the monarch before whom the degenerate successors of the Cæsars trembled, Ctesiphon, in the heyday of her prosperity, eclipsed even Imperial Rome, then sunk to the status of a provincial capital and ravished by barbarians. It is stated that in the days of Chosroes I and II no less than 90 % of Mesopotamia was under irrigation and that the land tax alone realized some £35,000,000 of our money. Of the Ctesiphon of those days there remains but one tremendous arch, with an adjoining façade. All around lie heaps of broken brick and mounds indicating the enormous extent of the ancient city. The arch of Ctesiphon must be almost the biggest thing of its kind in the world. More than a hundred feet high, 82 feet wide, and 164 feet long, it is reputed to have been the "Hall of Kings," wherein the Sassanian Monarchs were wont to receive their subsidiary princes. The photograph in the collection gives some idea of its proportions. Local experts are of opinion that this majestic ruin cannot much longer stand. The Arabs who, in the first fanatical frenzy which attended the birth of the Muhammadan religion, destroyed the parent city, have ever since used Ctesiphon as a quarry for the building and repair of Bagdad, and though this Vandalism is reputed to have been stopped of recent years, there is only too much reason to suppose that the majestic arch, which is now sole monument of the former grandeur of the place, will not much longer withstand the ravages of time and man.

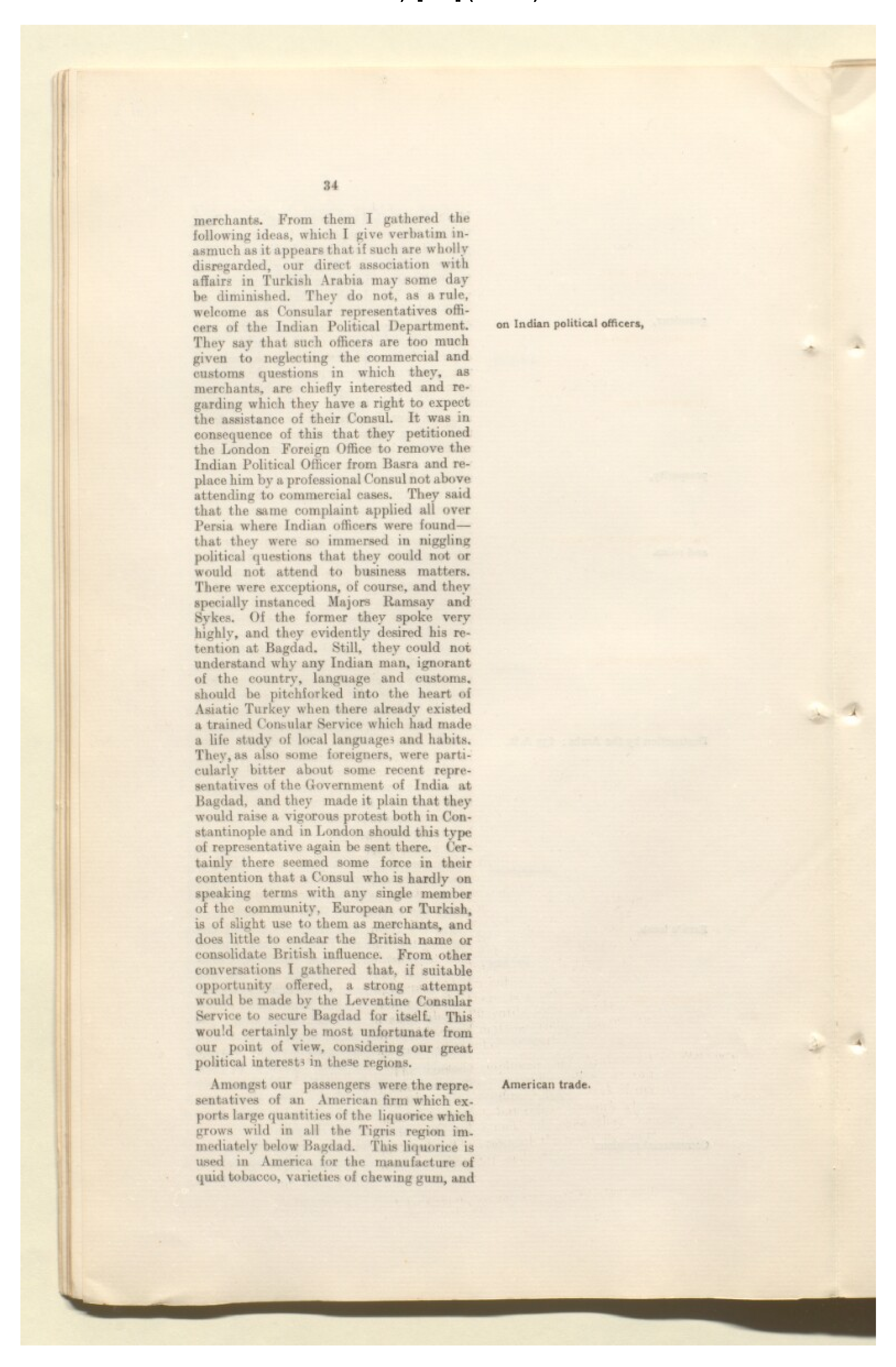
Margin notes: grandeur, / prosperity, / and ruins. / Destruction by the Arabs: 635 A.D.

Ezra's tomb.

Further down the river we passed the reputed tomb of the Prophet Ezra, a place held in much veneration by Jews, Christians, and Muhammadans. We did not stop, and so only saw the outside, which, with its blue-tiled dome, is obviously either entirely modern or much renovated. Finally, after the usual steps at Kut and Amara, and an interesting daylight voyage through the tortuous reaches in the marshes—swarming with wild boar—we duly returned to Basra two days ago, having taken something under three days for the journey from Bagdad.

Commercial opinions

On both the voyages up and down the river, we had, of course, ample opportunities for conversation with local European

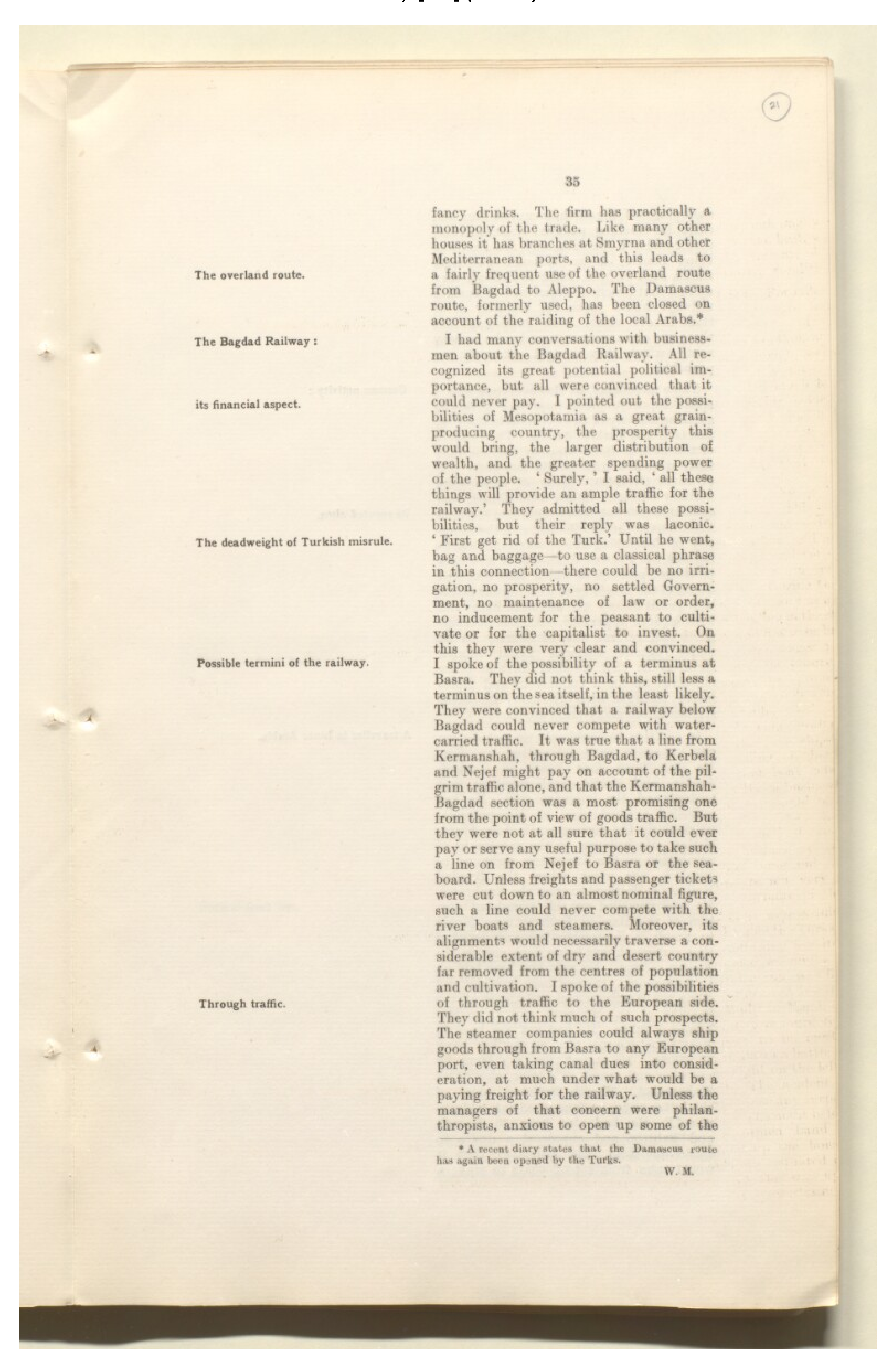


merchants. From them I gathered the following ideas, which I give verbatim inasmuch as it appears that if such are wholly disregarded, our direct association with affairs in Turkish Arabia may some day be diminished. They do not, as a rule, welcome as Consular representatives officers of the Indian Political Department. They say that such officers are too much given to neglecting the commercial and customs questions in which they, as merchants, are chiefly interested and regarding which they have a right to expect the assistance of their Consul. It was in consequence of this that they petitioned the London Foreign Office to remove the Indian Political Officer from Basra and replace him by a professional Consul not above attending to commercial cases. They said that the same complaint applied all over Persia where Indian officers were found—that they were so immersed in niggling political questions that they could not or would not attend to business matters. There were exceptions, of course, and they specially instanced Majors Ramsay and Sykes. Of the former they spoke very highly, and they evidently desired his retention at Bagdad. Still, they could not understand why any Indian man, ignorant of the country, language and customs, should be pitchforked into the heart of Asiatic Turkey when there already existed a trained Consular Service which had made a life study of local languages and habits. They, as also some foreigners, were particularly bitter about some recent representatives of the Government of India at Bagdad, and they made it plain that they would raise a vigorous protest both in Constantinople and in London should this type of representative again be sent there. Certainly there seemed some force in their contention that a Consul who is hardly on speaking terms with any single member of the community, European or Turkish, is of slight use to them as merchants, and does little to endear the British name or consolidate British influence. From other conversations I gathered that, if suitable opportunity offered, a strong attempt would be made by the Leventine Consular Service to secure Bagdad for itself. This would certainly be most unfortunate from our point of view, considering our great political interests in these regions.

on Indian political officers,

Amongst our passengers were the representatives of an American firm which exports large quantities of the liquorice which grows wild in all the Tigris region immediately below Bagdad. This liquorice is used in America for the manufacture of quid tobacco, varieties of chewing gum, and

American trade.



fancy drinks. The firm has practically a monopoly of the trade. Like many other houses it has branches at Smyrna and other Mediterranean ports, and this leads to a fairly frequent use of the overland route from Bagdad to Aleppo. The Damascus route, formerly used, has been closed on account of the raiding of the local Arabs.*

The overland route.

The Bagdad Railway: its financial aspect.

I had many conversations with business-men about the Bagdad Railway. All recognized its great potential political importance, but all were convinced that it could never pay. I pointed out the possibilities of Mesopotamia as a great grain-producing country, the prosperity this would bring, the larger distribution of wealth, and the greater spending power of the people. 'Surely,' I said, 'all these things will provide an ample traffic for the railway.' They admitted all these possibilities, but their reply was laconic. 'First get rid of the Turk.' Until he went, bag and baggage—to use a classical phrase in this connection—there could be no irrigation, no prosperity, no settled Government, no maintenance of law or order, no inducement for the peasant to cultivate or for the capitalist to invest. On this they were very clear and convinced.

The deadweight of Turkish misrule.

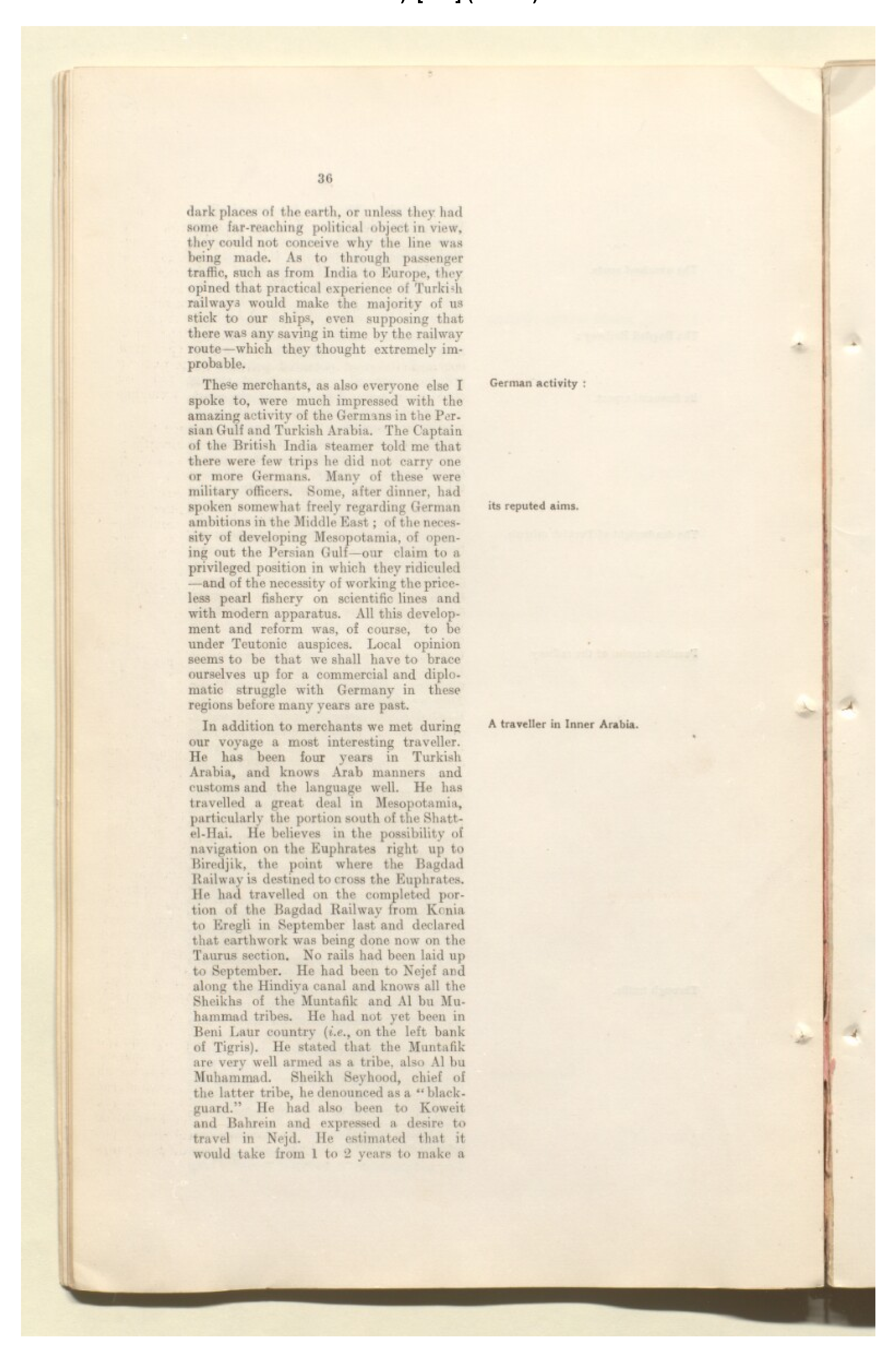
Possible termini of the railway.

I spoke of the possibility of a terminus at Basra. They did not think this, still less a terminus on the sea itself, in the least likely. They were convinced that a railway below Bagdad could never compete with water-carried traffic. It was true that a line from Kermanshah, through Bagdad, to Kerbela and Nejef might pay on account of the pilgrim traffic alone, and that the Kermanshah-Bagdad section was a most promising one from the point of view of goods traffic. But they were not at all sure that it could ever pay or serve any useful purpose to take such a line on from Nejef to Basra or the seaboard. Unless freights and passenger tickets were cut down to an almost nominal figure, such a line could never compete with the river boats and steamers. Moreover, its alignments would necessarily traverse a considerable extent of dry and desert country far removed from the centres of population and cultivation.

Through traffic.

I spoke of the possibilities of through traffic to the European side. They did not think much of such prospects. The steamer companies could always ship goods through from Basra to any European port, even taking canal dues into consideration, at much under what would be a paying freight for the railway. Unless the managers of that concern were philanthropists, anxious to open up some of the

* A recent diary states that the Damascus route has again been opened by the Turks.
W. M.



dark places of the earth, or unless they had some far-reaching political object in view, they could not conceive why the line was being made. As to through passenger traffic, such as from India to Europe, they opined that practical experience of Turkish railways would make the majority of us stick to our ships, even supposing that there was any saving in time by the railway route—which they thought extremely improbable.

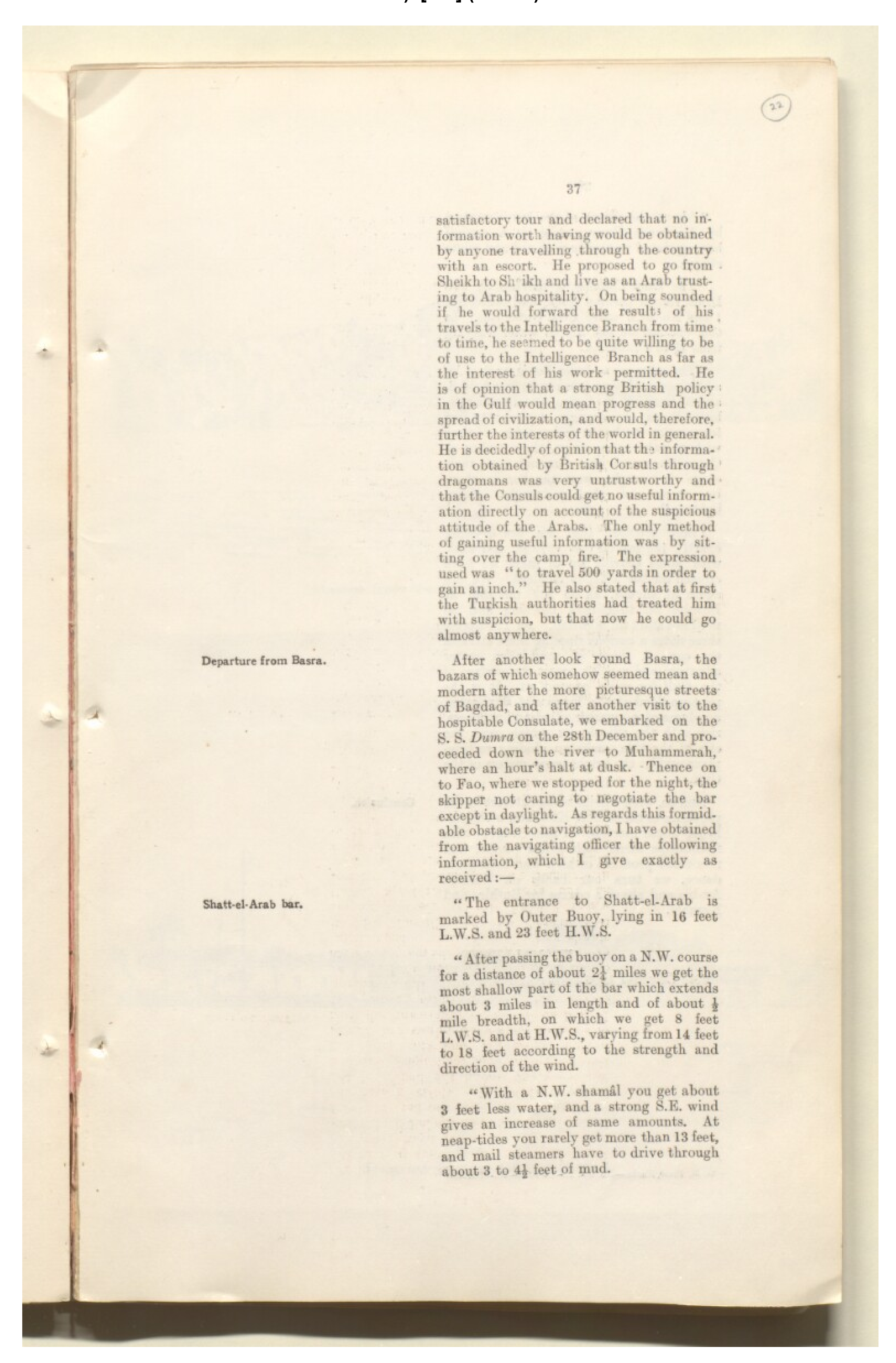
German activity :

These merchants, as also everyone else I spoke to, were much impressed with the amazing activity of the Germans in the Persian Gulf and Turkish Arabia. The Captain of the British India steamer told me that there were few trips he did not carry one or more Germans. Many of these were military officers. Some, after dinner, had spoken somewhat freely regarding German ambitions in the Middle East; of the necessity of developing Mesopotamia, of opening out the Persian Gulf—our claim to a privileged position in which they ridiculed—and of the necessity of working the priceless pearl fishery on scientific lines and with modern apparatus. All this development and reform was, of course, to be under Teutonic auspices. Local opinion seems to be that we shall have to brace ourselves up for a commercial and diplomatic struggle with Germany in these regions before many years are past.

its reputed aims.

A traveller in Inner Arabia.

In addition to merchants we met during our voyage a most interesting traveller. He has been four years in Turkish Arabia, and knows Arab manners and customs and the language well. He has travelled a great deal in Mesopotamia, particularly the portion south of the Shatt-el-Hai. He believes in the possibility of navigation on the Euphrates right up to Biredjik, the point where the Bagdad Railway is destined to cross the Euphrates. He had travelled on the completed portion of the Bagdad Railway from Konia to Eregli in September last and declared that earthwork was being done now on the Taurus section. No rails had been laid up to September. He had been to Nejef and along the Hindiya canal and knows all the Sheikhs of the Muntafik and Al bu Muhammad tribes. He had not yet been in Beni Laur country (*i.e.*, on the left bank of Tigris). He stated that the Muntafik are very well armed as a tribe, also Al bu Muhammad. Sheikh Seyhood, chief of the latter tribe, he denounced as a "blackguard." He had also been to Koweit and Bahrein and expressed a desire to travel in Nejd. He estimated that it would take from 1 to 2 years to make a



satisfactory tour and declared that no information worth having would be obtained by anyone travelling through the country with an escort. He proposed to go from Sheikh to Sheikh and live as an Arab trusting to Arab hospitality. On being sounded if he would forward the results of his travels to the Intelligence Branch from time to time, he seemed to be quite willing to be of use to the Intelligence Branch as far as the interest of his work permitted. He is of opinion that a strong British policy in the Gulf would mean progress and the spread of civilization, and would, therefore, further the interests of the world in general. He is decidedly of opinion that the information obtained by British Consuls through dragomans was very untrustworthy and that the Consuls could get no useful information directly on account of the suspicious attitude of the Arabs. The only method of gaining useful information was by sitting over the camp fire. The expression used was "to travel 500 yards in order to gain an inch." He also stated that at first the Turkish authorities had treated him with suspicion, but that now he could go almost anywhere.

Departure from Basra.

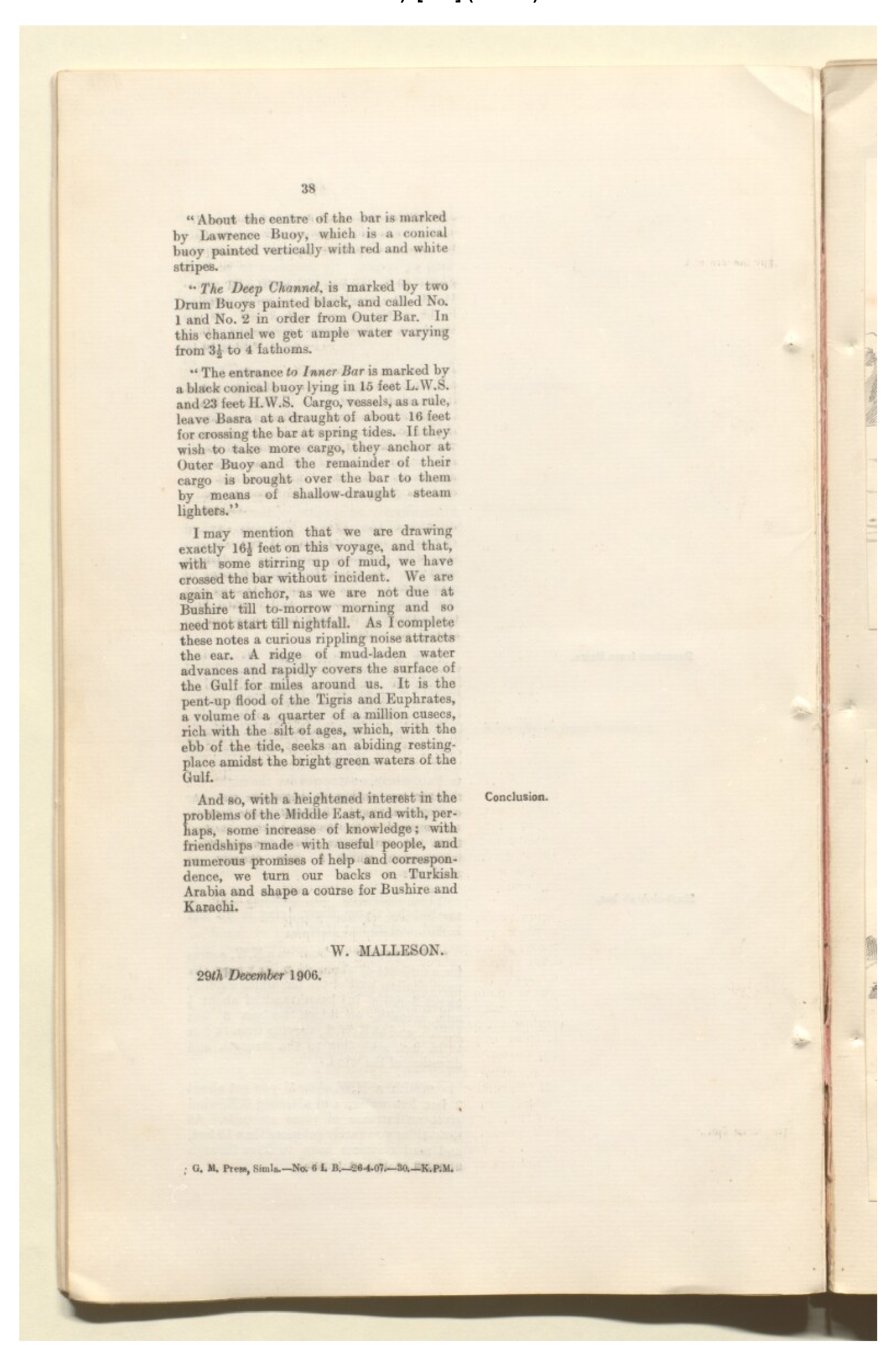
After another look round Basra, the bazars of which somehow seemed mean and modern after the more picturesque streets of Bagdad, and after another visit to the hospitable Consulate, we embarked on the S. S. *Dumra* on the 28th December and proceeded down the river to Muhammerah, where an hour's halt at dusk. Thence on to Fao, where we stopped for the night, the skipper not caring to negotiate the bar except in daylight. As regards this formidable obstacle to navigation, I have obtained from the navigating officer the following information, which I give exactly as received:—

Shatt-el-Arab bar.

"The entrance to Shatt-el-Arab is marked by Outer Buoy, lying in 16 feet L.W.S. and 23 feet H.W.S.

"After passing the buoy on a N.W. course for a distance of about 2½ miles we get the most shallow part of the bar which extends about 3 miles in length and of about ½ mile breadth, on which we get 8 feet L.W.S. and at H.W.S., varying from 14 feet to 18 feet according to the strength and direction of the wind.

"With a N.W. shamâl you get about 3 feet less water, and a strong S.E. wind gives an increase of same amounts. At neap-tides you rarely get more than 13 feet, and mail steamers have to drive through about 3 to 4½ feet of mud.



38

"About the centre of the bar is marked by Lawrence Buoy, which is a conical buoy painted vertically with red and white stripes.

"*The Deep Channel*, is marked by two Drum Buoys painted black, and called No. 1 and No. 2 in order from Outer Bar. In this channel we get ample water varying from 3½ to 4 fathoms.

"The entrance *to Inner Bar* is marked by a black conical buoy lying in 15 feet L.W.S. and 23 feet H.W.S. Cargo, vessels, as a rule, leave Basra at a draught of about 16 feet for crossing the bar at spring tides. If they wish to take more cargo, they anchor at Outer Buoy and the remainder of their cargo is brought over the bar to them by means of shallow-draught steam lighters."

I may mention that we are drawing exactly 16½ feet on this voyage, and that, with some stirring up of mud, we have crossed the bar without incident. We are again at anchor, as we are not due at Bushire till to-morrow morning and so need not start till nightfall. As I complete these notes a curious rippling noise attracts the ear. A ridge of mud-laden water advances and rapidly covers the surface of the Gulf for miles around us. It is the pent-up flood of the Tigris and Euphrates, a volume of a quarter of a million cusecs, rich with the silt of ages, which, with the ebb of the tide, seeks an abiding resting-place amidst the bright green waters of the Gulf.

Conclusion.

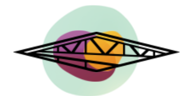
And so, with a heightened interest in the problems of the Middle East, and with, perhaps, some increase of knowledge; with friendships made with useful people, and numerous promises of help and correspondence, we turn our backs on Turkish Arabia and shape a course for Bushire and Karachi.

W. MALLESON.

29th December 1906.

G. M. Press, Simla.—No. 6 I. B.—26-4-07.—30.—K.P.M.



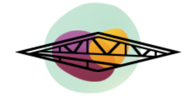


23

Maskat from the Harbour Entrance

FAO
Telegraph Station and Post Office

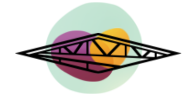




24 2

The Shatt-el-Arab at Basra, from the Quarantine station

The Shatt-el-Arab at Basra. Another view.





3

25

mosque and minaret of coloured tiles at Basra

The British Consulate and Messrs Lynch's offices Basra; Showing 4000 tons of merchandise awaiting shipment to Bagdad.





26 4

Arsenal

Entrance to Ashar Creek

Customs House

The Shatt-el-Arab at Basra

Entrance to the Ashar creek Basra.



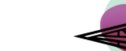


'House of dragoman of British Consulate Basra. On the Ashar Creek.'
Photographer: Wilfrid Malleson [27r] (1/2)

House of dragoman of British Consulate Basra. On the Ashar Creek.

The Ashar Creek Basra.





(28) 6

The Ashar Creek, Basra

The Ashar Creek Basra.





29 7

The ashar Creek Basra.

Junction of Tigris and Euphrates at Kurna
The smoke is the result of extensive reed-burning in the marshes.





'Kurna, – the reputed Garden of Eden.' Photographer: Wilfrid Malleson [30r] (1/2)

Kurna, – the reputed Garden of Eden.

A mehaleh, or river boat on the Tigris.







81 9

a Mehaleh on the Tigris

a Turkish steamer and barge en-route for Bagdad





32 10

Kut.

Kut.





'Examination of tickets on the Khalifa' Photographer: Wilfrid Malleson [33r] (1/2)

11

33

Examination of tickets on the Khalifa

Bahreini pilgrims on board the Khalifa.





'View of Bagdad from the roof of the Residency.' Photographer: Wilfrid Malleson
[34r] (1/2)

34 12

View of Bagdad from the roof of Residency.

Street in Bagdad.





'View in Bagdad.' Photographer: Wilfrid Malleson [35r] (1/2)



35 13

View in Bagdad.

View in Bagdad.







'View in Bagdad.' Photographer: Wilfrid Malleson [36r] (1/2)

14

36

View in Bagdad.

Entrance of the main bazar from the bridge of boats
Custom House on the right.







'In the Bagdad Bazar.' Photographer: Wilfrid Malleson [37r] (1/2)

37 15

In the Bagdad Bazar.

Near the big mosque, Bagdad







'Cafe and mosque near the North Gate, Bagdad.' Photographer: Wilfrid Malleson
[38r] (1/2)

38 16

A street in Bagdad.

Cafe and mosque near the North Gate, Bagdad.






A street in Bagdad.

A street in Bagdad.





40 18

An Arab café in Bagdad.

Near the Customs House, Bagdad.





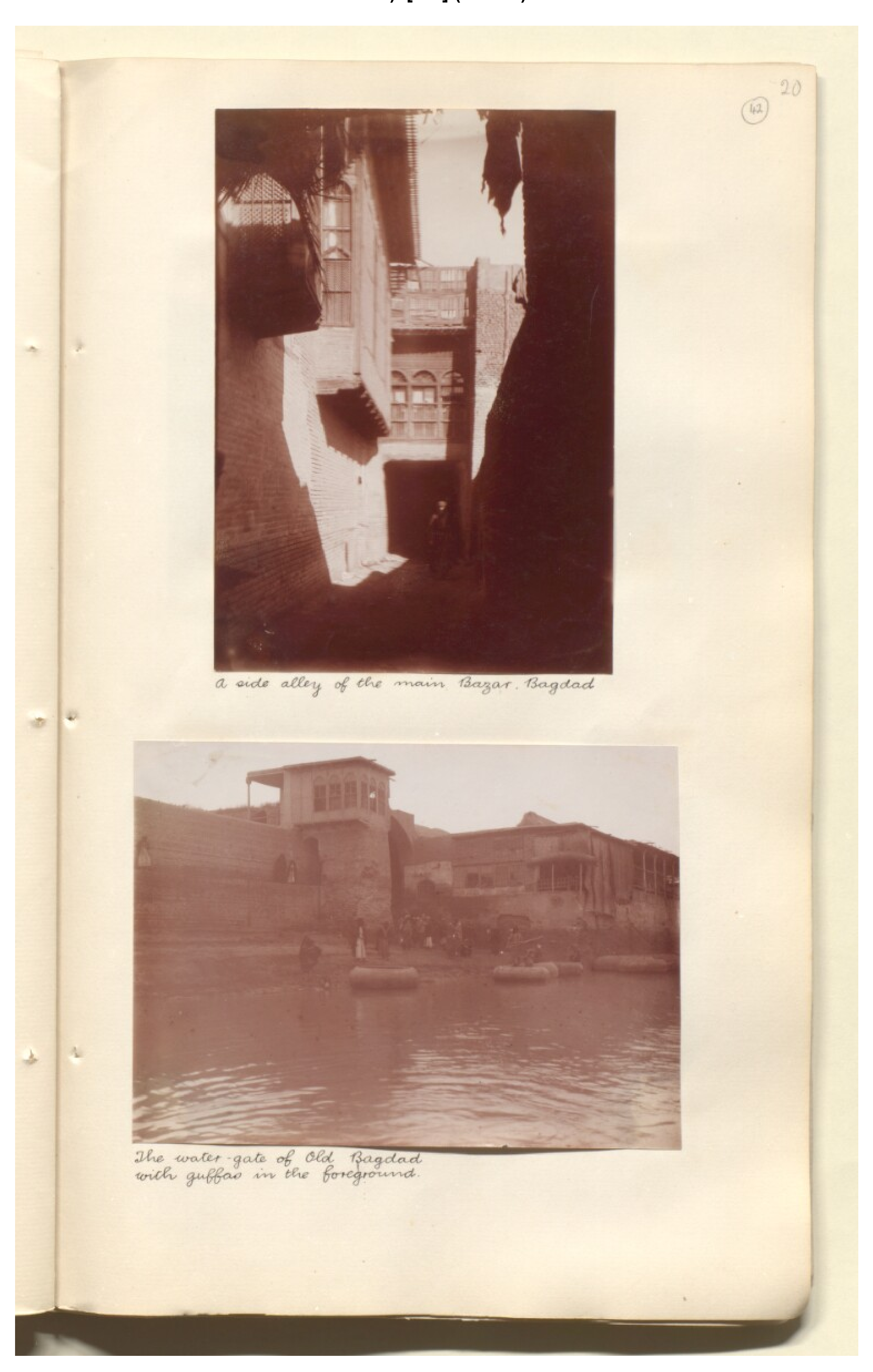
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41

In the European quarter, Bagdad.

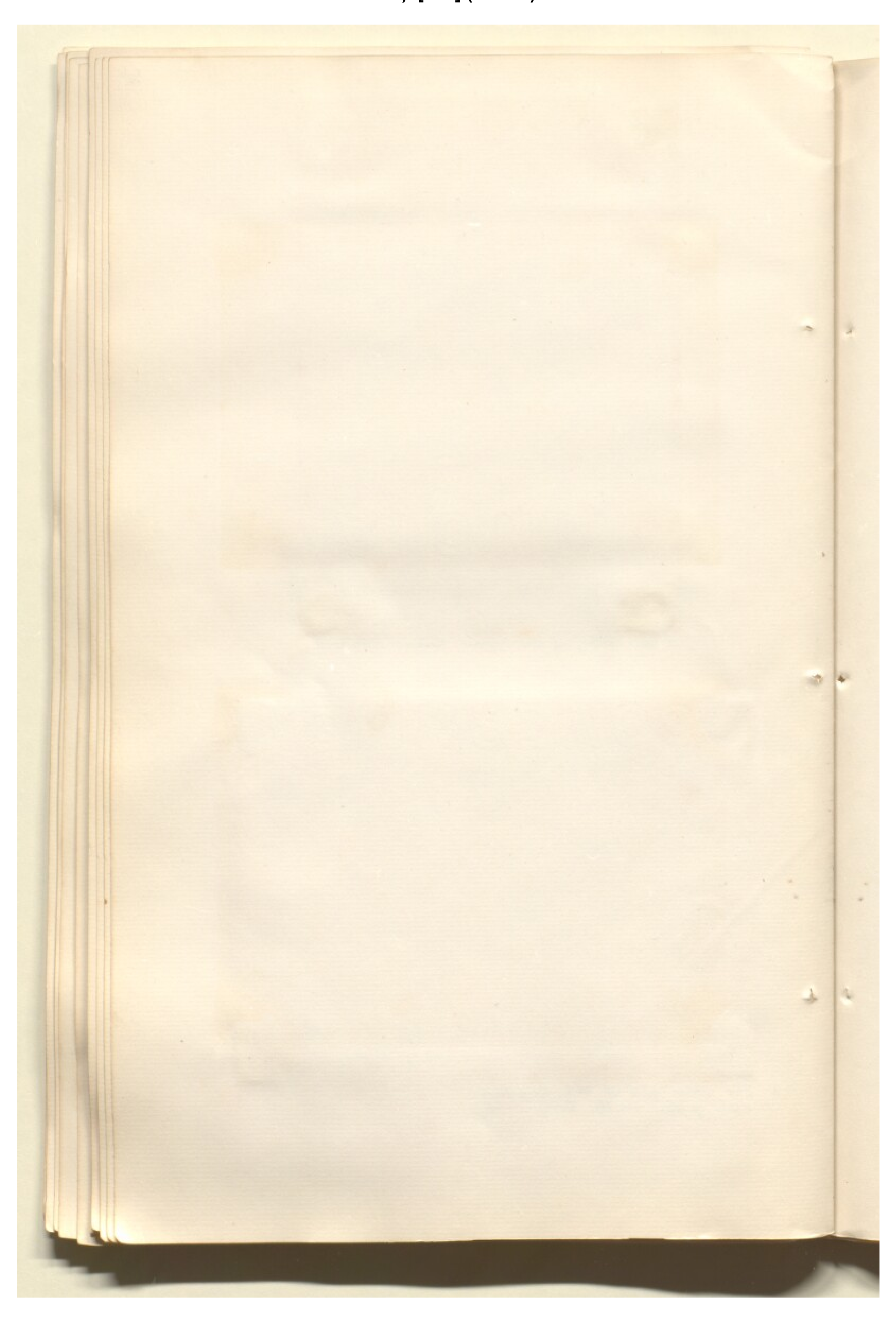
Entrance of the main bazar, Bagdad.





A side alley of the main Bazar, Bagdad

The water-gate of Old Bagdad with guffas in the foreground.





'Our conveyance across the desert to Babylon' Photographer: Wilfrid Malleson
[43r] (1/2)

21

(43)

Our conveyance across the desert to Babylon

Mahmudiyeh, the first stage on the road to Babylon.







22

44

another view of Mahmudiyeh

Part of El Kasr, Babylon.






(45) . 23

Babylon

The gates of the
Temple of Ashtaroth
Babylon.
showing the
moulded brick-
work.





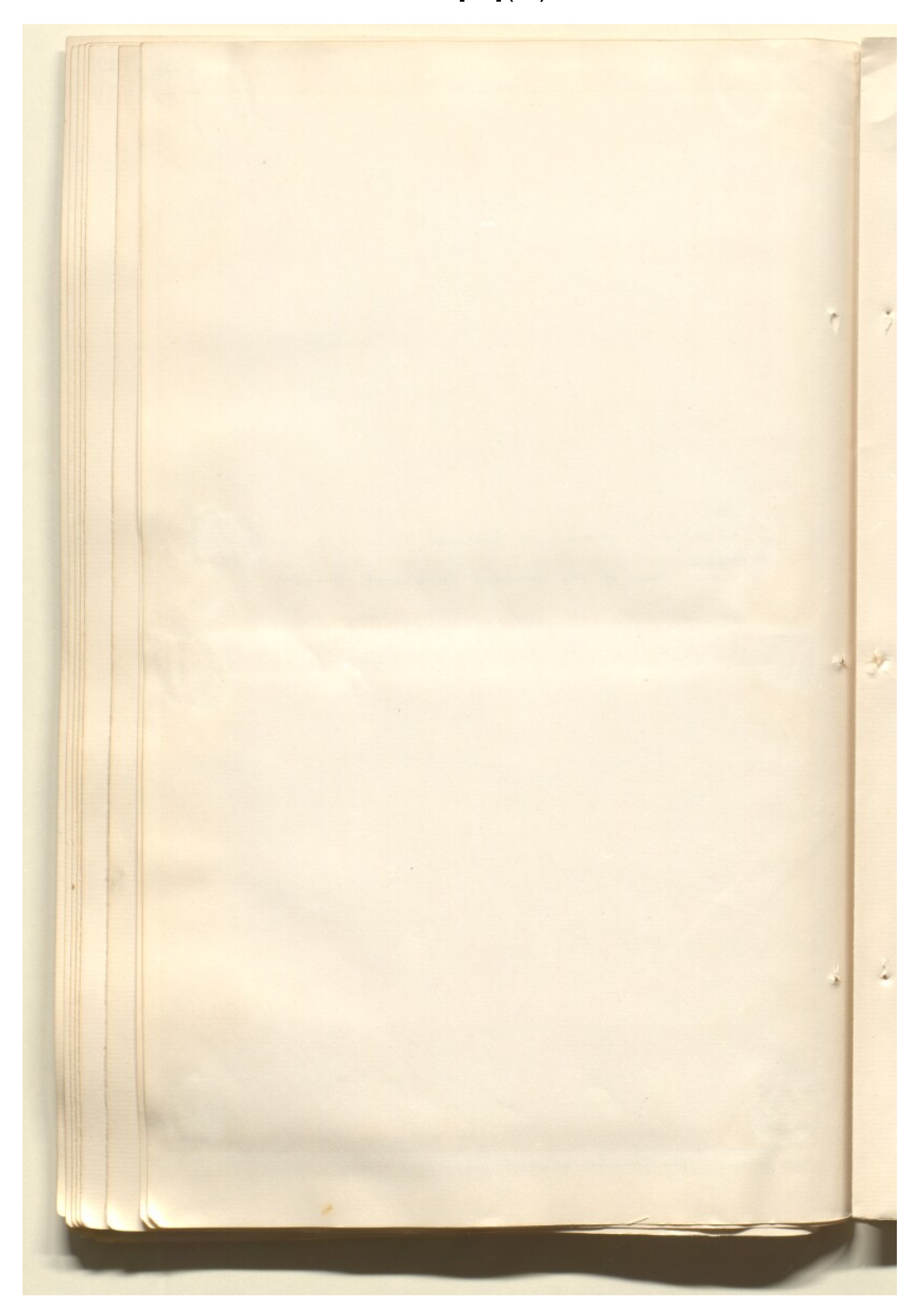


24

(46)

A nearer view of the moulded brick work, Babylon.

Sculpture, supposed by missionaries to be emblematic of Daniel in the lions' den. (The German savants scout this theory.)







47 25

Excavations in Babylon

The only arch so far discovered in Babylon.



48 26

The Khalifa, halted at Ctesiphon

The Arch of Ctesiphon









49 27

The tomb of Ezra, on the Tigris.

Jawalchul Island Musandim Fali el Asad Strait The mainland of Oman

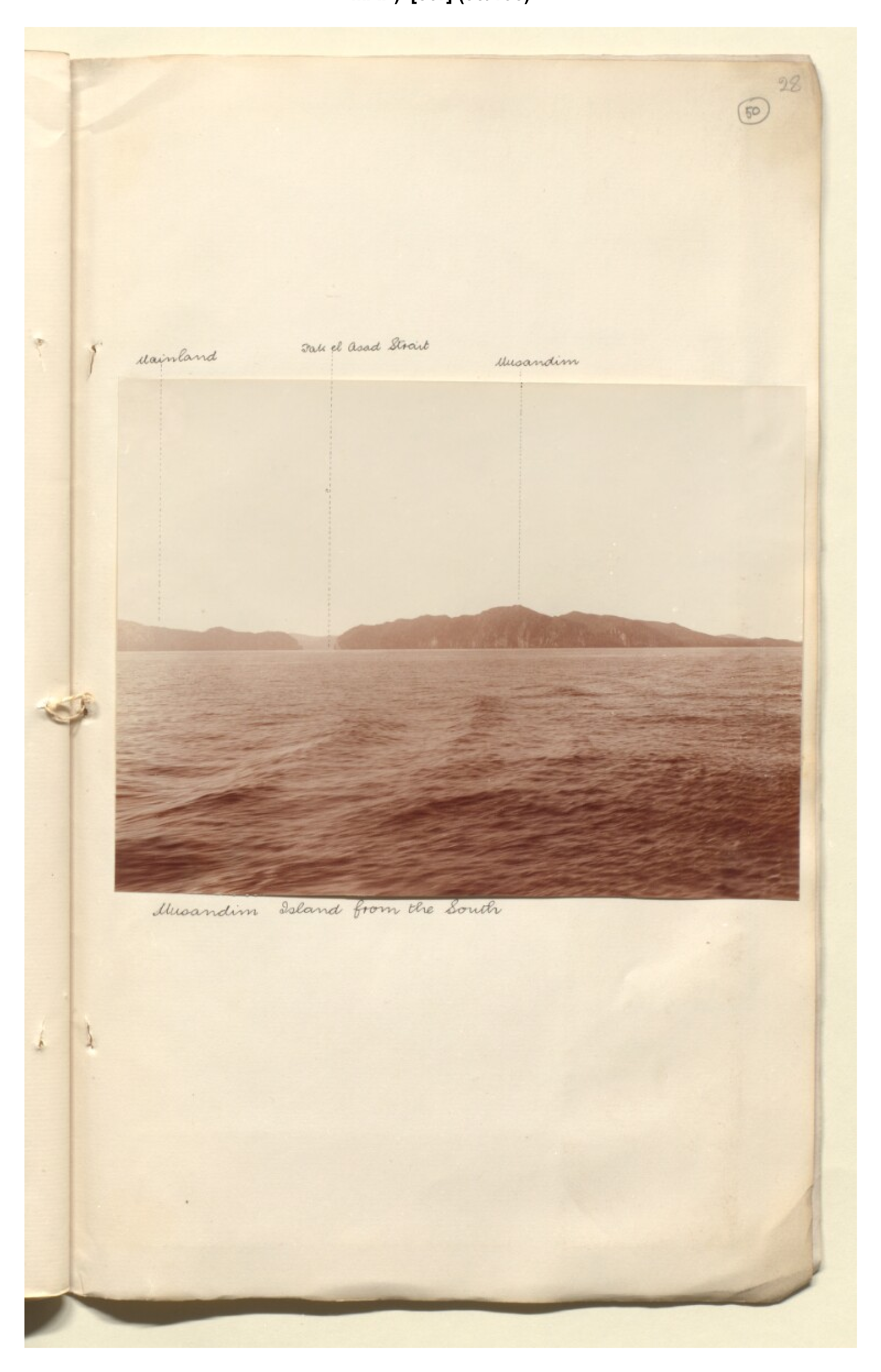
Musandim promontory from the west.





28

50



Musandim Island from the South





51

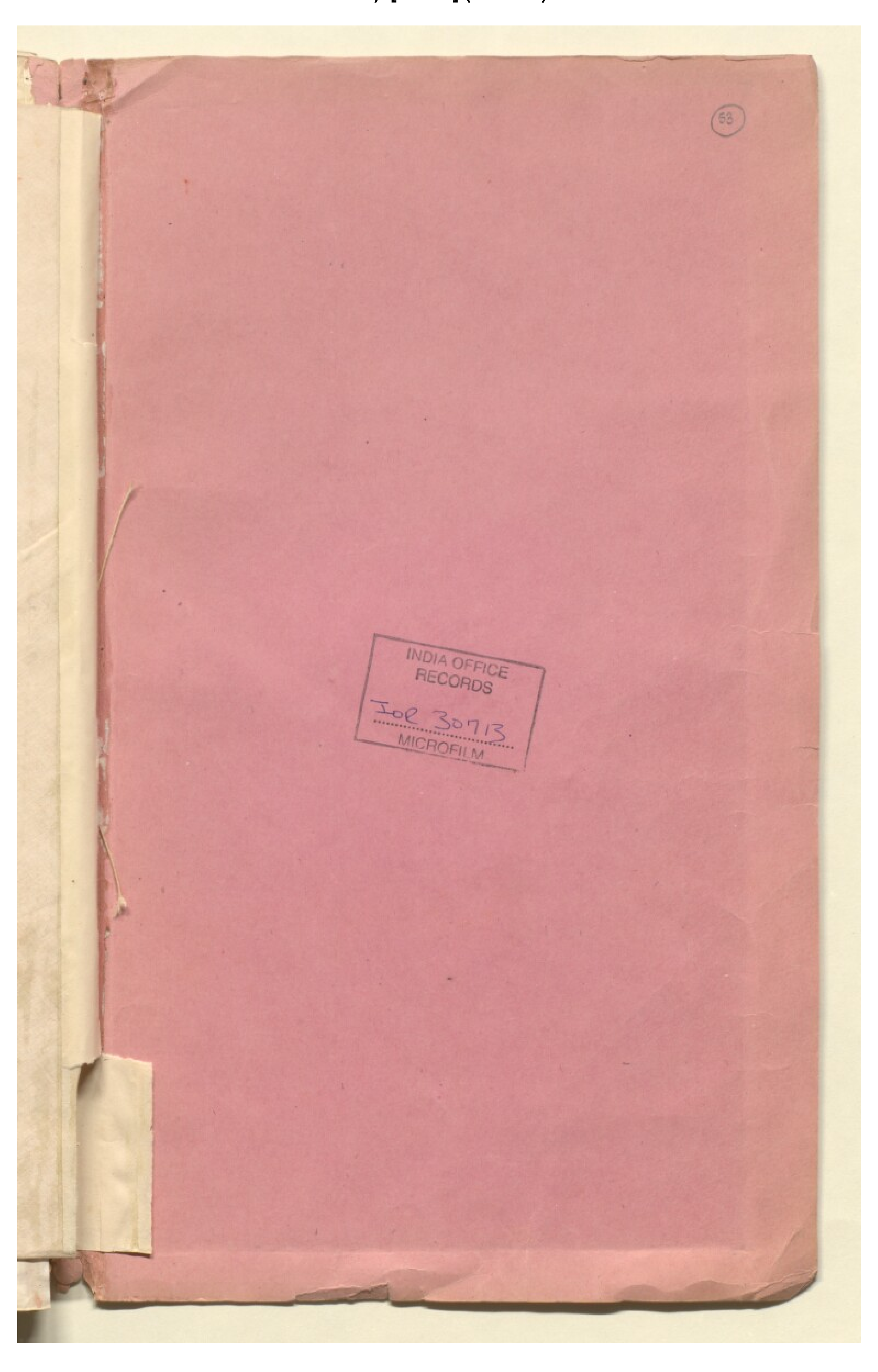
Entrance to the Gulf, and Musandim Island.







52



(53)
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